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Christian Doctrines and Duties explained and recommended;

IN

FORTY SERMONS

Preached in the PARISH CHURCHES

OF

St. *Andrew Undershaft,*

AND

Allhallows the Great:

And Divers of them,

In *Eton* College Chapel, and other Places.

In TWO VOLUMES.

By *WILLIAM BERRIMAN*, D. D.

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SERMON I.

The Folly *and* Danger *of denying a* PROVIDENCE.

ZEPH. i. xii.

And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are setled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

SERM. I.

THE good impressions which *Hezekiah*'s Piety had left upon the minds of his people, were easily worn out by the influence and ill example of his Successors. Such were the Corruptions that crept in among them, both in Faith and Practice; so universally had the Contagion spread, so deeply had they suck'd the Poison, and so much was its Malignity confirm'd by time, that some Expositors have thought, *Josiah*'s commendable Zeal was not able to *finish* the Reformation he *began:* for that even in his Reign, they were still ripe for Vengeance; and this Prophet *Zephany* was sent to foretell the Captivity of the *Jews*, by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*, in punishment of their abominable Sins.

SERM. I. But whether we approve of this Conjecture or no; whether we ſuppoſe *Joſiah*'s pious Endeavours to have been thus entirely defeated; or rather, that this Prophecy was deliver'd in the beginning of his Reign, before he had time to proceed far in his Reformation; it may be preſumed, however, that the Sins, to which it threatens Vengeance, owed their Riſe and Confirmation to *Manaſſeh*'s Impiety; againſt which the ſame Captivity had elſewhere been denounc'd. And among the acts of Vengeance threatened at the time of that Captivity, is That of the Text; which I have choſen for the Subject of our preſent Meditations. *It ſhall come to paſs at that time, that I will ſearch Jeruſalem with candles, and puniſh the men that are ſetled on their lees; that ſay in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.*

By *ſearching with candles*, undoubtedly is meant, that exact Account, which God would take, of the moſt ſecret Sinners in *Jeruſalem*; in order to bring on them the juſt Judgment and Puniſhment of their Impiety. For as *candles* are uſed, in examining the darkeſt and moſt private corners; and the Woman therefore in the Parable, that had loſt the piece of money, is ſaid to have *light a candle and ſought diligently till ſhe found it*; ſo God, (who ſees all things, that are done in the privateſt retirements, and from whom nothing in nature can poſſibly be hid) is pleaſed to expreſs

his univerſal Knowledge by ſuch Phraſes, as SERM. are uſed to ſignify the narroweſt and moſt ex- I. act ſearch, by *ſearching the* very *hearts and reins*; by *ſearching with candles*, and the like.

And from hence, therefore, in the Book of *Proverbs* it is ſaid, *the ſpirit of man is the* candle *of the Lord, ſearching all the inward parts of the belly* *; to ſignify, among other things, that Almighty God is as intimately acquainted with every man, as his own Spirit is. Thus God knew the ſtate of theſe *Jews*; and the conſequence of this Knowledge, as it follows, would be their Puniſhment.

In diſcourſing farther from the words, I ſhall do theſe two things.

I. I ſhall conſider the Character of the perſons, againſt whom this Prophecy is denounc'd.

II. I ſhall ſhew the Vanity of that Principle, upon which they proceeded.

I. FIRST, I ſhall conſider the Character of the perſons, againſt whom this Prophecy is denounced. And in That, there are two things proper to be obſerv'd, *viz.*

1. The State or Condition of the men: they are here ſaid to be *ſettled on their lees.*

2. The Principle upon which it was founded: they ſaid in their heart, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.*

* Prov. xx. 27.

SERM. I. I. *First*, the State or Condition of the men, who are here said to be *settled on their lees.* In times of Prosperity and Peace, when all things run smooth and easy, and Religion is fashionable as well as good; it is then difficult for us to distinguish between the truly pious and the formal Hypocrite. For all we have to judge by, lies in outside appearance; whereas true Religion must be grounded in the heart, and have its spring and principle within. The *form of Godliness* may be put on upon secular motives; for the sake of Riches or Honours; to insinuate into men's Affections; to gain Applause and Reputation; as well as from a real sense of Duty and Obedience to God.

Now whichever be the Principle, the Appearance is the same, all clear and serene; and such as ought indeed, by the rules of Charity, to be judg'd honest and sincere. But alas! many times it is but as wine *settled on the lees*, which, however bright it may appear, is yet at bottom foul and muddy; and very different from that appearance. Nay, and as That too, upon a slight motion, will be foul'd and disorder'd with its own sediment; so these men, *when persecution ariseth for the word's sake, by and by they are offended.* Alas! they cannot bear the shock of Persecution, or other outward inconvenience: it stirs up, and betrays the foulness of their minds; and, separating Religion from their worldly

worldly intereſt, it pulls off their plauſible diſguiſe, and leaves them to follow, where Affection leads. SERM. I.

This might perhaps be the temper of thoſe men, who are ſaid here, in the Text, to be *ſettled on their lees:* and the rather, becauſe the wicked Principle which follows, is ſuch, as they are ſaid not to profeſs openly; but to *ſay*, or conceive only *in their heart*. They had not yet arrived at ſuch a flagrant pitch of Wickedneſs, as publickly to deny God's Providence, and Government of the world. No; They were more like wine ſettled on the lees: they bore a fair ſhew of Religion; they appear'd the Servants and Worſhippers of God: but at bottom they were foul and impious; as a little trial in the tempeſt of Adverſity would quickly teſtify, by ſtirring up the dregs of Vice that lay conceal'd; and ſo proving all their pompous ſhew of Virtue to be meer Diſſimulation and Hypocriſy.

This Senſe (I ſay) the Phraſe may bear. But as the ſettlement of any liquor upon its lees, muſt be the work of time, and argues it to have been kept ſtill and quiet: So when men are ſaid to have *ſettled on their lees*, this may have no regard to any bright appearance, or ſhew they make of Virtue; but rather to their thoughtleſs and indolent ſecurity, ariſing from that calm and eaſy ſtate of life they have enjoy'd, without being toſs'd up and down by adverſe and unfortunate Events. Thus

SERM. I. 'tis plainly taken by the Prophet *Jeremy*. *Moab* (says he) *hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath* settled on his lees, *and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity* *. But then let us remember, it is not every state of Prosperity, that is properly expres's'd by this *Metaphor*. It is not so when men receive it as a Blessing, and improve it accordingly, to virtuous purposes. But it is when they make it an occasion of stupid security in Sin; when they *dread* no Punishment, because they *feel* no Smart: but are willing to flatter themselves with a full license to sin; so long as they see it attended with no present inconvenience. This was the case of *Moab* in the Prophet *Jeremy*. *Therefore* (says he) *his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.* His present ease and safety, made him thoughtless and supine; going on still, and persisting in his old Abominations, without once reflecting on the evil of his ways.

And this too (I believe I may venture to add) was the case of the *Jews*, in the time of *Zephany*. Long Peace and Tranquillity had they enjoy'd; which, instead of producing its due effects of Love and Gratitude towards God, had made them stupidly profane and irreligious. And if *Josiah*'s pious care had brought them, to a little better outward face of Religion than they had before; yet still they

* Jer. xlviii. 11.

conti-

continued *Atheiſts* or *Epicures* within; they denied God's Providence, and Government of the world; believed there would be no reward of virtuous actions, and expected no puniſhment to be inflicted upon Sinners. For this we ſhall find in the SERM. I.

2. *Second* place, to be the meaning of that Principle, upon which they founded their ſecurity; *they ſaid in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* By which they could not mean, that God *can* do nothing at all, neither perform ſuch actions as are good, nor do any thing that is baſe and ſinful. (The *latter* of theſe would have been readily confeſs'd, the commiſſion of Sin being wholly inconſiſtent with the Divine Purity: and the *former* no one ever yet has ventured to aſſert.) But they meant, that God does not concern himſelf about the actions of men, either to puniſh or reward them; that he will neither do good to *good men*, nor inflict evil upon *bad*, but leave them to act even as they liſt; without any danger of *Puniſhment* on one hand, or reaſonable proſpect of *Advantage* on the other. 'Tis thus, the Prophet *Iſaiah* upbraids the Heathen Idols, with their inability to execute Rewards or Puniſhments. —*Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea do good or do evil, that we may be diſmay'd and behold it together* *. So that this their Prin-

* Iſaiah. xli. 23.

SERM. I. ciple was a flat denial of Divine Providence, which takes off all effectual reſtraint of human actions, and deſtroys all virtuous Principles and Practices together.

Such has ſometimes been the madneſs of men, ariſing either from abſurd Theories of the Divine nature; which they ſuppoſe (if not incapable of attending to ſuch vaſt variety of Events, at leaſt) too highly exalted above this lower world, to be concern'd at all about ſuch trifles as are acted in it: or elſe from unjuſt obſervations upon the Government of the world; in which, they conclude, things could never be manag'd as they are; Vice ſo often go unpuniſh'd, and Virtue ſo often unrewarded; if all Events were ordered and diſpoſed, by a juſt and wiſe, a holy and a gracious God.

The laſt of theſe ſeems to have been the ground of the Error of thoſe mentioned in the Text. They had hitherto been calm and quiet, and they were ſettled on their lees: they expected no moleſtation or diſturbance in their Wickedneſs; but from their preſent Eaſe and Proſperity, were led to conclude, that God regarded not the actions of men; and therefore would neither do them *good* for their Virtues, nor *evil* for their Sins. For which reaſon he here threatens them, that he would be ſure to execute the Severities they did not fear; that he would even *ſearch Jeruſalem with candles*, to find out the moſt ſecret

ſecret Sinners, and puniſh the men that were thus *ſettled on their lees*. Which leads me in order to the other Head propoſed, namely, SERM. I.

II. *Secondly*, The Vanity of that Principle upon which they proceeded; the Vanity of all ſuch wicked Impeachments of Divine Providence. And this (I judge) will ſufficiently appear from thoſe Arguments which may be urged, to prove an overruling Providence, that governs the world, that diſpenſes Rewards to Virtue, and Puniſhments to Sin; and are briefly, for method ſake, reduced to theſe three ſorts; namely, ſuch as are drawn from Authority, Reaſon, and Experience. And

1. *Firſt* then, for *Authority*; we have the general Conſent of all Sects and Parties of men, that have acknowledged a Deity, except the *Epicureans*, on the ſide of Providence. And the *Epicureans*, for denying it, have been cenſured commonly as *Atheiſts*, as in effect diſowning the Exiſtence of a God; however they acknowledged it in words. Upon this Principle were founded all thoſe Sacrifices and Prayers, that were deſigned either to appeaſe the anger, or implore the favour of the gods, or elſe to thank them for Bleſſings formerly beſtow'd. Which had all been vain and uſeleſs, had their Worſhippers believ'd them unconcern'd at what is done below; unable to hear, or hearing to aſſiſt; whom they needed neither be afraid to provoke,

SERM. I. voke, nor ambitious to pleaſe. Nay, ſo thoroughly have men been perſuaded, that this world is under the Government of a ſuperior Being; that many have run into an extream this way, and been led from hence to conclude an abſolute *Fatality* of all Events, and deny the *Liberty* of human actions.

I would build no more on this Confeſſion of the *heathen* world, than we do uſually on their acknowledgment of the Being of a God; not that all their notions of his Government were right, (for they were widely different and inconſiſtent with each other) but that the certainty of his Government in general is ſo clearly deducible from the moſt natural and obvious Principles, that it extorted their aſſent, by its own Light and Evidence; and however they differ'd as to the *manner*, they were agreed as to the *thing*.

From them, if we come to *Revelation*, the holy Scriptures are full of Expreſſions of this nature. To God they aſcribe the Government of all Cauſes, whether natural, fortuitous, or moral; the diſpoſal and ordering of all Events, and particularly with reference to the caſe before us, the aſſigning to Virtue and Vice reſpectively, their ſeveral Rewards and Puniſhments. 'Twere endleſs to reckon up the inſtances of this kind. Let it ſuffice to ſay, that the whole Scheme of our Religion is built upon this very ſuppoſition. For whence proceed the Promiſes and Threatnings

nings in Scripture, but from God's love of Virtue, and hatred againſt Sin; from his firm purpoſe of rewarding the *one*, and puniſhing the *other?* What need of a SAVIOUR to redeem us from his wrath; if no offences of ours were able to provoke him? or, what need of Prayers thro' that Saviour's Merits; if he were no way concern'd at any thing we do? What need, again, of Laws to regulate our Actions; if God regarded not their Regulation? Or, what uſe of Sanctions to enforce thoſe Laws; if they were to ſtand as Cyphers only, and be never executed? So that he, who will ſubſcribe to *Chriſtian* Principles, muſt own, in this inſtance at leaſt, the Care and Government of Providence. And as for the profane and irreligious, they ought to own it too; when they urge the unequal Diſtributions in this life, as an objection againſt the Juſtice, Goodneſs, or Holineſs of God. For objections of this kind muſt proceed upon the ſuppoſition of God's governing the world; and can have no force at all, unleſs he be actually concern'd in thoſe objected Diſtributions. But enough has already been argued from *Authority*. SERM. I.

2. *Secondly*, the ſame will appear likewiſe, to be the voice of *Reaſon*. For as the world has no Principle of Subſiſtence in itſelf; but owes its being to ſome prior and ſuperior Cauſe; ſo the ſame muſt be concern'd for the preſerving and ordering it ſtill. Chance can

no

SERM. I. no more preſerve or govern the world than it could *make* it at the firſt. And therefore if we allow God to have been the *Maker of heaven and earth*, we muſt allow him to govern and direct them ſtill. If no Power, leſs than infinite, could produce ſuch vaſt variety of marvellous Effects as we ſee, in this viſible creation; the ſame muſt be required afterwards, to ſuperviſe and order them, without Error and Confuſion.

Thus far we may argue, from the nature of things, for God's Government in general. And then more particularly, for the diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments, we argue from the nature of God; that a Being of infinite Wiſdom, Juſtice, Holineſs and Goodneſs, cannot but be concern'd for the advancement of Virtue, and poſſeſs'd of a juſt hatred and abhorrence of Sin; and therefore cannot but propoſe ſuch Encouragements to the one, and Diſcouragements from the other, as may beſt anſwer the juſt Ends of righteous Government, and be ſufficient motives for a rational creature to govern himſelf by.

And this indeed is ſo plain a Principle of Reaſon, that they who have deny'd the Government of Providence, have uſually founded their opinion on a miſtaken notion of God's not knowing the things that are done upon the earth; and being placed in a ſtate above taking notice or regard of them. Thus the *Epicureans* in particular, repreſented their deities

deities as a lazy and unactive kind of Beings, whose Happiness consisted in the profoundest ease and silence; and could not bear to be disturb'd with the observation and care of this tumultuous world. And so the wicked, in the *Psalmist*'s days, *said in their heart, God hath forgotten, he hideth away his face, and he will never see it* *. Again, *they say, how doth God know? and is their knowledge in the most High* †? *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it* ‖. Such reverence they had for the Divine Majesty, that they chose to make God *ignorant*, rather than *unjust*; and thereby tacitly confess'd, that if his Perfections could be prov'd such as they are commonly believ'd to be; if he has both *Knowledge* to perceive the actions of men, and *Power* to punish or reward them; there could be then no longer doubt, but he would deal with them according to the exact rules of unbounded Goodness and unspotted Purity, unbias's'd Justice, and unerring Wisdom. SERM. I.

But as the *Psalmist* urges, in answer to such persons, *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity* ‡. To suppose the Creator and first Cause of all things *not*

* Psal. x. 11. † Psal lxxiii. 11 ‖ Psal. xciv 7.
‡ Psal. xciv. 9, 10, 11.

SERM. I. poſſeſs'd of all poſſible Perfections, is as great an abſurdity, as to ſuppoſe a creature that *is* poſſeſs'd of them. For whatever Perfections are in all creatures diſperſed throughout the world, muſt have been firſt collectively, and tranſcendently in that Cauſe, from which they are derived. So that they are but Rays (as it were) of the Creator's Power and Excellence, and muſt continue always under his Cognizance, and immediate Direction.

3. *Thirdly*, What is thus ſupported by *Authority*, and enforced by Principles of *Reaſon*, is no leſs viſibly confirm'd, in the laſt place, by every day's *Experience*. For when we obſerve, how artfully all things are contrived, for the furtherance of the common Good; how admirably all the parts of the creation are adapted to the purpoſes of their reſpective natures, and made in a proper manner to contribute to the ſervice of each other; how regularly Times and Seaſons in ſucceſſion take their places, and the influences of the heavens (by their proper revolutions) ſerve to produce the fruits of the earth, and make the climate healthy; nay laſtly, when any thing ſeems irregular, and out of courſe, how even That is made ſubſervient to wiſe deſigns: When we obſerve all this, he muſt be a man, I ſay, not only of inexcuſable Perverſeneſs, but even of ſhameleſs Impudence, that ſhall aſcribe ſuch things to the management of Fortune and blind Chance,

Chance, as could not have been better di- SERM. rected by the most perfect and consummate I. Wisdom.

And if these considerations convince us of the Sovereignty and Government of Providence; a little farther observation will vindicate the Divine Justice and Goodness, in a fit Distribution of Rewards and Punishments. For in such manner do we see the nature of things order'd by the supreme Author of nature, that Virtue and Vice do generally, in good measure, carry their own Recompence along with them. That pleasure which men take in doing virtuous actions, and That satisfaction in reflecting on them afterwards; That peace and quiet of Conscience, which from hence arises, are returns, by no means to be overlook'd; and such as, tho' founded in the nature of the thing, are yet too considerable to be so by Chance, without the wise Order and Appointment of the Lord of all things. So again on the other hand, That terror, shame, and remorse, with which bad actions are resolved on, executed, or remember'd, may justly be reckoned in the black detail of those Punishments, wherewith Providence is pleased to discourage and revenge *Sin*.

Besides these internal tokens of the Divine Favour or Displeasure; we daily see, that Health and Prosperity, and long Life, are annex'd, as well as promised, to the practice of

SERM. I. of Virtue; whilſt Diſeaſes, Poverty, and Death itſelf are the natural indeed, but ordain'd Conſequence and Puniſhment of Sin.

Theſe they bear likewiſe in their own perſons. And then from other men, Benevolence, Reputation, and Eſteem, are thought a juſt tribute to the *Good*; whilſt cold Diſdain, Contempt and Infamy, are made, in the reverſe, the Recompence of *Wickedneſs*.

Nay, even natural cauſes are made to act in ſubſerviency to Providence *: God guides, exerts, or ſuſpends the influences of nature; He makes the Soil fruitful or barren at his pleaſure; the Air wholſome or peſtilential; and in ten thouſand inſtances, the Works of his hands, when he would puniſh or reward men by them, are made to *fulfill his commandment*, and be *obedient to the voice of his word*. Nay ſometimes even Prodigies are wrought, the Laws of nature ſet aſide, or contradicted, and by the moſt ſurprizing, unexpected Events, the Mercy or Judgment of God is made conſpicuous.

And now if they, who know ſome or more of theſe things to be matter of every day's *Experience*, ſhall yet perſiſt in their Unbelief of the Government of Providence; and go on ſtill to *ſay in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil*; we muſt deſpair of ever convincing ſuch men of any thing at all. For what argument is there

* See Dr. Sherlock of Provid. Chap. 3.

can

can have force sufficient to gain their assent to the truth of any Proposition; if their own observation and experience has not? However, that they may not complain of being censured without hearing; let us take a brief view of what they have to offer, either from the nature of God, or from the order of things. SERM. I.

What is objected from the nature of God, does indeed but betray the ignorance of the objectors, and will therefore ask but little pains to silence and confute it.

Do they say, it is impossible for him to attend at once to such a multitude of actions and events, at such vast distances of place, as must be supposed, if the Care and Government of the Universe be attributed to him? But who is he shall dare set bounds to unlimited Omnipotence; or prescribe to God, as he does to the sea; *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be staid?*

They who can conceive of God, that he is altogether such a one as themselves, may entertain such absurd thoughts of the confinement of his Power. But they, who have a juster sense of the infinite Perfections of the Lord of all things, have only to enquire, whether such care as this, implies a *contradiction* in itself; and if it does not this, they count it no objection, that to a limited nature it appears *difficult:* because there can no ar-

SERM. I. gument be drawn from the capacity of *finite* creatures, to that of an *infinite* Creator.

Or do they say again, that such care (if possible) would disturb, at least, that ease and quiet which makes the Happiness of God? This likewise (to omit their notion of Happiness consisting in supine indolence and inactivity; this likewise) is owing to the same fallacy. *Difficult* and *easy* are meer relative Terms, proper to be used, where the capacity and powers of the Agent are confined; but not where the Agent is himself the Fountain of all Power, and knows no bounds: So that he can with the same readiness perform every thing, that implies no contradiction, as he can do any one of them.

Or do they say, lastly, that the care of such mean creatures, as inhabit this lower world, is beneath the Majesty of God; that he may govern with delight indeed, the beauteous orders of Angels and Archangels in the Choir of Heaven; but that it seems too great a piece of condescension, to concern himself about the things that are in earth? *Nay, but O man, who art thou that replyest against God?* Did God display his Majesty in the Creation of the world? And shall it be thought an abasement to preserve and govern it? Did he give his Son for the Redemption of Mankind, and will he think them below his notice and concern? Sure, He will not think those creatures beneath the care of his Providence,

vidence, whom he at firſt diſdain'd not to create; and much leſs thoſe, whom he ſent his Son into the world to redeem. And therefore they, who make this objection, would do well to conſider, how impiouſly they reflect on the great Author of their Being and Salvation; whilſt upon this wretched pretence they diſbelieve his Providence. Indeed, all their vain reaſonings will do little ſervice to their cauſe, when they are thus every day confuted (as has been ſhewn already) by plain Experience and Fact. SERM. I.

For what they object, on the other hand, from the order of things, that there are many occurrences in this world, which they can no way account for, or reconcile with the notions they have of Juſtice and Goodneſs; and therefore cannot ſuppoſe, to be ſo order'd by a Being infinitely juſt and good: This objection, I ſay, will be of no weight, unleſs they could perfectly diſcern the diſpoſitions of *men*, and the tendency of *things*; and foreſee the final iſſue of the whole matter. For ſo long as men that appear virtuous, may be vain and hypocritical; and they that are really virtuous, may be ſlander'd and traduced for vicious: So long again, as things to appearance good and beneficial, may by ſome means or other become hurtful and a Curſe; and evils on the other hand, thro' the favour of God, may be chang'd into a Bleſſing: Laſtly, ſo long as no man can properly

SERM. I. be called happy or miſerable before his death; but God has determin'd to adjuſt every thing exactly in a future ſtate: for theſe Reaſons, whatever difficulties there may ſeem to be, in the preſent diſtributions of Providence, they can be no juſt objections againſt it; nor argue, either, that God is not the Author of thoſe diſtributions, or that his diſtributions are unjuſt.

The Rules of Providence are eaſy to be underſtood; as far as Juſtice and Goodneſs are concern'd in them, and they are agreeable to our common notions of thoſe Attributes: But the application of thoſe Rules to particular Events, is not always manifeſt to us. For the choice of proper methods of Government is an act of the Divine Wiſdom; and ſuch is the Wiſdom of God, that he diſpoſes particular Events to purpoſes we cannot apprehend. His *Judgments* therefore *are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out.* We cannot always account for the methods of his Government, but we ought always to believe them juſt and good; becauſe he can do nothing inconſiſtent with thoſe Perfections of his Nature. In this the friends of Providence will readily acquieſce: and even its enemies cannot but own it may be true; ſince they muſt find themſelves ignorant of many circumſtances in every Event, which makes them unable to determine infallibly about it.

I cannot now ſtay, to inſtance in particular caſes, but would conclude the whole Diſcourſe with this one Reflexion: that *ſeeing theſe things are ſo*; ſince God governs the world, and we are therefore under the inſpection of one, who is privy to our moſt ſecret thoughts, and *ſpieth out all our ways*; to whom the darkneſs is as clear as the light, and from whom no ſecret can be hid; who alſo is juſt to puniſh or reward us according to our deeds, and able likewiſe to proceed as Juſtice ſhall direct: *ſeeing theſe things are ſo, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs?* How ſhould we ſtudy to approve ourſelves to him; upon whoſe final approbation, our Happineſs or Miſery does ſo entirely depend? Alas! they muſt live without ſerious thought, or reflexion on theſe things, that can go on, in a courſe of Sin and Diſobedience againſt him. Or elſe they muſt be men of the ſame character with thoſe in the Text, who were *ſettled on their lees, and ſaid in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* SERM. I.

May God Almighty, by his Grace, preſerve us from ſuch ſupine Negligence on one hand, and from ſuch fatal Principles on the other; which are productive of ſuch wicked Practices, and therefore attended with ſuch woful Conſequences, for *Chriſt Jeſus*'s ſake, his only Son our Lord, *to whom with the Father*, &c.

SERMON II.

The Importance *of* St. PAUL's Preaching *before* FELIX.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and anſwer'd, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee.

SERM. II.

THE Preacher of our Text, St. *Paul*, was an Apoſtle, but a Priſoner; yet no way deterr'd (by the Sufferings he already had endured, or might farther expect, by the Grandeur or the Vices of his Auditory,) from diſcharging his Office with Sincerity; from preaching up the neceſſity of Temperance and Purity with regard to ourſelves, of Juſtice and Equity to others; and the certainty of a future Day of Recompenſe, when our behaviour in theſe Matters ſhall be duly conſider'd; *and God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

His principal Auditor was *Felix*, a man notoriouſly guilty, both of Oppreſſion and Incontinence; and therefore defective in both thoſe

thoſe Inſtances of Duty, which the Apoſtle had inculcated. Conſequently the expectation of a *future Judgment* muſt be, to him, extremely terrifying, and uneaſy. Accordingly the mention of it had ſuch effect upon him, that it made him *tremble*. But then, as his diſpoſition was not changed, he choſe to put off the conſideration, that was ſo unpleaſant, and rather than part with his Sins, to think no more of the Puniſhment, that was due to them. This is the juſt ſtate of the caſe, both as to the *Apoſtles*'s preaching, and the *Governor*'s behaviour. *As he reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and anſwer'd, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee.* In the Text there are conſiderable theſe FOUR Parts, into which it naturally divides itſelf, *viz.*

SERM. II.

I. St. *Paul*'s Method in this Sermon before *Felix: He reaſoned*, ſays the Text.

II. The ſubject Matter of his Diſcourſe, and that was *righteouſneſs, temperance*, and *judgment to come.*

III. The effect it had upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him, *Felix trembled.* And,

IV. The Manner of the Governors ſtifling his Conviction with theſe Words, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee.*

SERM. II. I. FIRST then, I begin with St. *Paul*'s Method in this Sermon before *Felix: He reaſoned*, ſays the Text.

From the nature of Man, and from the ends of Society; he argued for the Duties of *Righteouſneſs* and *Temperance:* and from the Nature of God, and the whole order of things, he collected the certainty of a future *Judgment*; when God ſhall try us by thoſe Laws, he has preſcribed, and give *every man according as his work ſhall be.* His Arguments were ſtrong and cogent, his Deductions were clear and undeniable; inſomuch that they ſtartled and ſurprized the *Roman Governor:* who agreed with him in no Principles, but thoſe of natural Reaſon; and would have been inflexible to all his Arguments, if they had not been *rational.* From hence then we may obſerve the *uſe of Reaſon*, in judging of the Doctrines of Religion; how when God vouchſafed a Revelation of his Will, and ordain'd a certain Order of men, to interpret and explain it; he meant not thereby to ſuperſede the uſe of our Faculties, and command ſuch a blind aſſent, as is not founded in Principles of Reaſon. Religion is a noble Improvement; of which the reaſonable mind alone is capable. And ſurely then, it muſt be moſt abſurd, and inconſiſtent, as well as much to the Diſhonour of Religion, to conſider them as oppoſite Principles; and ſuppoſe us under a neceſſity of ceaſing

ing to be *rational*, when we commence *religious*. SERM. II.

When St. *Paul* reaſoned, or argued before *Felix*, he plainly referr'd the matter to the deciſion of his own Judgment; and 'twas only by the uſe of That, he could be ſuppoſed to attend to the Apoſtle's Perſuaſions, and determine in favour of his Doctrine. To the ſame purpoſe we are elſewhere exhorted, *to walk by the ſame rule**, and to *be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh, a reaſon of the hope that is in us*†. Nor is there any danger to Religion, from this method of proceeding; becauſe *Reaſon* is always on the ſide of *Truth:* and conſequently thoſe Doctrines, which are true, will ever be more confirm'd and certain to us, the more we uſe our *Reaſon* in conſidering and obſerving them.

So that when we ſee ſome men ſo extremely ſolicitous to decry the uſe of Reaſon, or *private Judgment*; one would be apt to ſuſpect, 'tis becauſe they are themſelves jealous of the Cauſe they undertake; and being doubtful of the *Truth* of their Doctrines; or conſcious of their *Falſhood*, they are unwilling to ſubmit them to an equal and impartial Scrutiny. And yet after all their clamours againſt *private Judgment*, 'tis *impoſſible* to exclude it; and whilſt they inveigh againſt it with the greateſt vehemence, they

* Phil. iii. 16. † 1 Pet. iii. 15.

are

SERM. II. are forced to appeal to it, for the determination of their cauſe.

For when they argue from the Weakneſs of human Reaſon, or the Authority of the Church; they do manifeſtly refer it to every man's Judgment, whether their Arguments be juſt or no, and ſufficient to ſupport their Concluſion. And in vain then, will they endeavour to deſtroy That, which at laſt muſt be the Judge and Umpire of the whole Controverſy. For if by their Arguments, I ſhould be induced to yield an implicit aſſent to all the Doctrines of their Church; it is not becauſe my *private Judgment* is excluded; (no; that is abſolutely impoſſible!) but becauſe I am firſt perſuaded, in my own Judgment, that I ought to be determined by ſuch Authority.

But methinks I could almoſt forgive thoſe inconſiſtent Pleaders for Submiſſion, when I conſider the wild Extravagances, on the other hand, advanced by our modern aſſertors of Liberty; who are for raiſing human Reaſon as much too high, as the others would depreſs it too low. Becauſe every thing, that is propoſed to our Belief, muſt be determined by *private Judgment*; they think we have no more to do, but to conſult our own ſentiments, and that *private Judgment* has no need to be conducted by any aſſiſtances that are offer'd *from without*. But this alas! is not to *uſe* our Reaſon, but *abuſe* it. For That, if con-

consulted with a modest, impartial eye, and without an overweening opinion of our own Excellency, would quickly teach us, that we are not, of our selves, *sufficient for these things*; that 'tis indeed the business of Reason to judge of the Arguments, that are urged in proof of any Proposition; but that those Arguments may be of various kinds; sometimes arising from *the Nature of the thing*, at other times from the general *Consent* and *Experience* of mankind; from the *Testimony of others*, who have had better opportunities and means of Enquiry; or lastly, from *the Testimony of God*, who can neither err nor deceive. So then, if the Mysteries of Faith be unsearchable to human Reason, and such as we could never, by any powers of nature have discover'd; yet when they are reveal'd and confirmed to us, as the Oracles of God, human Reason itself tells us, they ought to be believ'd and admitted as undoubtedly true. So that they, who pretend to rely so wholly upon *Reason*, as to reject all other *Authority*; do, in reality, but contradict themselves: since if they would hearken to the voice of *Reason*, that would instruct them to take in all the Arguments, that may be offer'd; and then determine, as the matter shall appear, upon a fair examination of the whole Evidence. SERM. II.

From St. *Paul*'s Example we see, that it is no way absurd *to reason* in Divinity; and that however Reason be not alone sufficient, but

SERM. II. but the Grace of God is requiſite, to enlighten our Underſtandings, and ſanctify the uſe of Reaſon; yet a ſerious regard to it is always neceſſary; and we ſhould never expect to find credit with our Auditors, when we preach to them only unintelligible jargon, and argue not from rational and conſiſtent Principles. But then he only (it muſt be remember'd) reaſons *juſtly*, who ſets every Argument in a proper light, and gives it its due Weight; who, in the Wiſe man's expreſſion, leans not too much to his *own Underſtanding*, but is willing to ſubmit himſelf to any Atteſtation of a competent Authority. And thus far of the Apoſtle's Method, in his Sermon before *Felix*; He *reaſon'd*, ſays the Text. The next, or

II. SECOND Head propoſed, was the ſubject Matter of his Diſcourſe; and that was, *righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come.* And theſe Points may be conſider'd, either *abſolutely* in themſelves; and ſo, St. *Paul*'s Sermon, whereof the Text gives this account, is nothing elſe, but his propoſing to an *Heathen* man's conſideration, the neceſſity of holding a juſt and upright Converſation, in all Sobriety and Chaſtity; becauſe God will one day *judge the world in righteouſneſs*, and recompenſe to *every man according to his works*: or elſe *relatively*, as he took occaſion to preach ſome ſubſtantial parts of the *Chriſtian* Religion to the Governor and his wife; that ſo he

he might haply bring them over to the Faith of *Chriſt*. I would ſpeak a little briefly to the Heads of the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe under each of theſe views ſeverally. And SERM. II.

1. *Firſt* then, let us conſider them abſolutely in themſelves; and ſo, St. *Paul*'s Sermon, whereof the Text gives this account, is nothing elſe, but his propoſing to an *Heathen* man's conſideration, the neceſſity of holding a juſt and upright converſation, in all Sobriety and Chaſtity: becauſe God will one day *judge the world in righteouſneſs*, and recompenſe to *every man according to his works*. To them, who conſider the nature and uſes of Society, even before they go on to conſult the Laws of Revelation; it will be no hard matter, to evince the neceſſity of a fair and equitable Correſpondence among men; that 'tis the Duty of the higher Powers, to uſe their Influence and Authority for the Protection of their Subjects, and not convert their Power into Tyranny and Oppreſſion; that thoſe Inferiors, in return, ſhould pay a willing Obedience; and inſtead of weakning their Governors by Mutiny and Rebellion, they ſhould exert the utmoſt of their ſtrength and intereſt to ſupport and maintain them; that laſtly, among fellow Subjects, there ſhould no arts be uſed of Fraud or Cozenage; nothing to over-reach or undermine each other; but all things managed in ſuch manner, as may favour of nothing but Juſtice, Equity and Love.

To

SERM. II.

To them again, who consider the Nature and Constitution of man; how by his rational Powers he is form'd for great and noble Designs, and consequently stoops below the end of his Being, when he gives himself up to sensual Satisfactions; how the indulgence of them will of course weaken his Body, and too much embarrass and oppress his Mind; how they at once take him off from his main business at *present*, and render him less fit to pursue it for the *future:* To such it will be easy to shew the obligation, that arises, from all these considerations, to observe a *Temperance*, or Moderation in our Pleasures, and not to run on, into Excess or Debauchery of any kind. The Convenience appears evidently from the nature of the thing; and that will lead us to the Will of the Creator, who has thus purposely ordained and constituted the nature of things; that they may, of themselves, dispose and lead us to the practice of Virtue. In the mean time, if these Laws of the Creator are by some men profanely disregarded and contemned, our natural notions of the Deity, that he is just, and wise, and powerful, may induce us to believe, that he will not pass by such insolence unpunished; but will one day inflict wrath upon his enemies, and heavily revenge their Disobedience.

From this view, we have taken of St. *Paul*'s Doctrine, upon natural or rational Principles, it appears, that the *heathen* world, tho'

tho' deſtitute of Revelation, yet were not utterly deprived of Light; for tho' they had not the Law outwardly diſpenſed; tho' they had no external or immediate Revelation, they were yet *a Law unto themſelves*; and had the matter or ſubſtance of it, as to moral practice, *written in their hearts*. The Book of Nature was their Rule; the Light of Reaſon was their Guide; the Precepts of Tradition were added to prevent their miſtake. In the order of things, they could read their Duty deſcribed; from the nature of God, they might collect the Puniſhment of their Tranſgreſſions. SERM. II.

And if all this fell ſhort of the Light, which *we* enjoy by Revelation; it was enough however to make *them* accountable for their Conduct, and puniſhable for their Defaults. But beſides this conſideration of the Heads of St. *Paul*'s Sermon, *abſolutely* and by themſelves; I ſhould remember, that they are moreover in the

2. *Second* place, to be conſidered *relatively*, and that in a twofold reſpect, *viz.*

1. In reſpect of that *Faith*, to which they appertain, *viz.* the *Faith of Chriſt*. And

2. In reſpect of the *Auditors*, before whom they were preached, namely, *Felix* and his wife *Druſilla*.

(1.) *Firſt* then, we will conſider them in reſpect of that *Faith*, or Syſtem of Religion, to which they appertain; and that is *the Faith of Chriſt*. The Accuſation of St. *Paul*, and

SERM. II. and the Defence, which he made for himſelf, at his firſt Hearing before *Felix*, turning in great meaſure upon the Terms and Obligation of the *Jewiſh* Law, and the nature of that Sect of the *Nazarenes*, that was then newly ſprung up; made it difficult for a *Heathen*, who was little acquainted with theſe matters, to determine between the Priſoner and his Accuſers. And therefore the Governor found it neceſſary, to defer his Deciſion of the Cauſe, 'till he ſhould have *more perfect knowledge of that way**.

This, as he might expect, from men learned in the Laws and Cuſtoms of the *Jews*; ſo it was but fair and equitable, he ſhould take ſome account of it, from the Priſoner himſelf. For which reaſon, *after certain Days* (as we have it in the verſe before the Text) when *his Wife Druſilla* was with him (whoſe Curioſity might make her deſirous to enquire into the Cauſe, and whoſe Education in the *Jewiſh* Religion made her better capable of underſtanding it,) he then ſent for St. *Paul*, on purpoſe *to hear him concerning the Faith in Chriſt*. And 'twas then, that the Apoſtle *reaſoned* before him *of righteouſneſs, temperance and judgment to come*. So that from hence 'tis evident, that he inſiſted on them, not meerly as points of Morality, or Doctrines of natural Religion, but with a farther view to the Religion he profeſs'd, and about

* *See* Hammond *and* Grotius.

which

which he was called in queſtion; or as they are neceſſary branches of the Chriſtian Syſtem. SERM. II.

There are two oppoſite miſtakes relating to good Works; both alike inconſiſtent with the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and deſtructive of the purpoſes of Chriſtian Life. For whilſt ſome have diſclaim'd and neglected them, as *needleſs* in the matter of Salvation; there have been others to extol and preach them up, as *meritorious*. Theſe *latter* detract from the Merit of *Chriſt*, and the Efficacy of our Faith in him; whilſt the *former* obſtruct that Purity and Holineſs of life which he requires. St. *Paul*, whatever account ſome have given of his notions, obſerv'd the middle between both extreams; ſo far from decrying the Virtue of good Works, that he earneſtly inſiſted on the neceſſity of *righteouſneſs and temperance*; both of Juſtice to our Neighbour, and of Purity in ourſelves: and yet, on the other hand, ſo far from aſcribing any Merit to them; that, as we may fairly gather from the whole tenor of his Writings, he reckon'd them vaſtly ſhort of the meaſure of Perfection: and for that reaſon, to be no way acceptable in themſelves; but only as they were done upon a Principle of Faith, and in Obedience to the Laws of God. 'Tis only when perform'd, out of ſuch pious Diſpoſitions, that our Works may be fairly deem'd the Works of Goſpel Obedience: and then,

SERM. II. for the ſake of that perfect Obedience, which *Chriſt* has paid, our Obedience, tho' imperfect, ſhall be graciouſly accepted.

Such then were thoſe good Works, ſuch was that *Righteouſneſs* and *Temperance*, which St. *Paul* preach'd before *Felix*, as enjoin'd by the Religion of *Chriſt*: not meerly the outward acts, or external appearance of thoſe Virtues; but the inward habit and diſpoſition of the Mind, influenced by his Laws, and govern'd by the hopes of his Salvation. He knew there were Duties required, as well as Privileges granted in the Church: but then withal he knew, that thoſe Duties are only made the Conditions of our Happineſs; and not neceſſarily, or in themſelves effective of it. Yet ſtill, as they are Duties and Conditions, he had from hence occaſion to collect, that they ſhall one day be enquired into by the ſupream Judge of all; in order to diſtribute Rewards or Puniſhments, in proportion as theſe Conditions have been neglected or obſerv'd. And tho' this Doctrine, we have ſeen, might be propoſed to the Governor, from Principles of Reaſon, or meer natural Light; yet farther, it was material to the Apoſtle's Deſign, to mention it, as one important Article of the Doctrine of *Chriſt*; that *God has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man, whom he hath ordained—to be the judge of quick and dead.* From the End and Purpoſe of this future

future Judgment it was eaſy to foreſee, that a moſt glorious Reward ſhould follow the diligent practice and obſervance of the Laws of *Chriſt*; and inſupportable Miſery revenge the violation of them. Or if the Governor were leſs apt to draw the conſequence, the Apoſtle knew how to inform him farther;—that the *unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*;—that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*; but every one, who would have hopes of ſuch Felicity, muſt *purifie himſelf, even as he is pure*;—that at the laſt day, *all that are in the graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the reſurrection of damnation.* SERM. II.

Let no one then pretend, that the proſpect of Reward, and fear of Puniſhment, are improper to be urged as motives to Obedience; that our Practice ought to be influenced by nothing elſe but the love of God and Goodneſs; that our views ſhould be perfectly diſintereſted, and free from all regard to ourſelves; and that any motive of this kind will vitiate our Performances, and make them criminal inſtead of virtuous. Our firſt tendency to good muſt naturally ariſe from a regard to ourſelves: and tho' other conſiderations may afterwards come in; yet where men have ſwerv'd from Duty, no doubt the Sanctions of the Divine Law, the Rewards and Puniſh-

SERM. II. niſhments annex'd, muſt needs be proper motives to begin a Reformation. To this purpoſe our Apoſtle mentions the *terrors of the Lord*, in his *ſecond* Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, as a proper inducement to *perſuade men*; and for that reaſon, in his *Sermon* before the *Roman* Governor, he enforced the neceſſity of *righteouſneſs and temperance* from the conſideration of *a judgment to come*. And this leads me in order to the

(2.) *Second* Relation, in which his ſubject is conſiderable; and that is, in reſpect of the Auditors before whom he preached; namely, *Felix* and his wife *Druſilla*.

It was an artful piece of Flattery in *Tertullus*, when he would gain the favour and good will of the Governor, to compliment him; that they enjoy'd *great quietneſs*, and that *very worthy deeds were done unto their nation by his Providence* *. But the *Roman Hiſtorian*, who had no Intereſt to ſerve in drawing his Character, has quite otherwiſe deſcribed him; as a man of a mean and ſervile diſpoſition, and that exerciſed his high Office in a moſt tyrannical and arbitrary manner. *Per omnem ſævitiam ac libidinem, jus regium ſervili ingenio exercuit*, ſays *Tacitus* †. And had there been no concurrent proof of this matter, in profane Hiſtory; yet the very account given of St. *Paul*'s

* Acts xxiv. 2. † Tacit. Hiſtor. l. 5. c. 9. vid. etiam Annal. l. 12. c. 9.

Impri-

Impriſonment in Scripture, would make it more than probable: for there we find him repreſented, as a perſon to be moved by Bribes; and as ſending for *Paul*, the oftner for this very reaſon, becauſe *he hoped that money ſhould have been given him of Paul, that he might looſe him* *. To theſe flagrant Crimes, in the adminiſtration of his Office; another *Hiſtorian* † adds an inſtance of his Incontinence, no leſs notorious. *Druſilla*, whom he call'd his Wife, had lawfully been married to a neighbouring Prince; but by the aſſiſtance of a Sorcerer had found means to deſert his Bed, and fly to the adulterous Embraces of this profligate *Roman*.

SERM. II.

Before this hopeful Couple, our Apoſtle was rather ſummon'd, than invited, to preach, and give ſome account of that Syſtem of Religion, for which he was a Priſoner. He duly conſider'd the condition of his Auditors; and therefore inſiſted principally on ſuch topicks, as were applicable to their caſe, and likely to ſtrike them, with the quickeſt ſenſe and Conviction of their Crimes; *He reaſoned of righteouſneſs, and temperance, and judgment to come.* A righteous Governor would never take a Bribe to pervert Judgment, nor want one to make him execute it; nor would he wantonly abuſe his Power to grieve and oppreſs the People that were under him. And therefore, when St. *Paul* reaſoned of the ne-

* Acts xxiv. 26. † Joſeph. Ant. Jud. l. 20. Cap. 6.

SERM. II. ceſſity of *Righteouſneſs*, he evidently reached the caſe of *Felix*; who was ſo notoriouſly guilty in theſe Particulars. Again, a man of Temperance and Continence, could not indulge himſelf in the adulterous invaſion of another's Bed; or entertain the Wife of his Neighbour as his own. And therefore, when the Apoſtle went on, to reaſon of the neceſſity of this Virtue likewiſe; both *Felix* and *Druſilla* muſt find themſelves concern'd, who were ſo ſcandalouſly guilty of the oppoſite Vice.

But had he reaſon'd only from the Amiableneſs and Expediency of the Virtues themſelves; ſuch harden'd Sinners had remain'd perhaps inflexible to his Diſcourſe. Their vitiated Appetites, ſo long inur'd to Sin, were little qualified to taſte the Sweets of Virtue. And therefore the Apoſtle choſe a fitter motive; he ſet before them *the terrors of the Lord*, and put them in mind,—how *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men**: how he has—*appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs* †,—and *render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth; but obey unrighteouſneſs; indignation and wrath*;

* Rom. i. 18. † Acts xvii. 31.

tribu-

*tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil, of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile: But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile**.

SERM. II.

In this Example of St. *Paul*, we have an illuſtrious Pattern ſet the Miniſters of *Chriſt*, to ſuit their Diſcourſes to the Condition of their Audience; however rich or powerful, to deal their Reproofs with an impartial hand, to the moſt *modiſh* and *faſhionable* Vices; and for that very reaſon, to inveigh more againſt them, becauſe they are more common and familiar. Neither the numbers of the Sinners, their Wealth nor their Authority, ſhould diſcourage or deter us from the execution of our Office, and giving them faithful warning of the pernicious Conſequences of their Sin. It is the Duty of our ſtation, to watch for their Souls, as they that muſt give account; and therefore we muſt be anſwerable for them, if we declare not *the whole counſel of God*; if we keep back any thing that may be profitable unto them, or neceſſary to their eternal Salvation. St. *Paul*, when he preached before a *Heathen*, was careful to apply himſelf to thoſe Vices in particular, of which the Perſon he ſpake to was moſt eminently guilty. And ſurely then, we ought not to be leſs ſolicitous, for the recovery of thoſe, who have

* Rom ii. 6. &c.

SERM. II. been admitted into *Christ*'s fold, but are again gone astray from *the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.*

It may not indeed be always proper, to make direct and personal Applications; as *Nathan*, by virtue of a special Commission, did to *David*, with a *Thou art the man.* It is not *fit* (as *Elihu* rightly observed) *to say to a King thou art wicked, and to Princes, ye are ungodly* *. Such conduct, instead of reforming, would often but exasperate, and provoke to Rage and Contradiction. It might sometimes perhaps be justified in private, where there is no Shame arising from Spectators, no Eyes of the Populace to be drawn upon the Sinner, no publick Infamy to ensue upon it. But in publick and popular Discourses, to point out particular Persons, and expose them as guilty of the Vices we arraign, would hardly be endured. It would be so far from having any good effect upon them, that it would rather prejudice them against our future Labours; and make them more difficult to hear, and to receive Instruction. St. *Paul*, for this reason, took a different method; he insisted in general upon such topicks as were most suitable to the Condition of his Hearers; but he left the Application to those Hearers themselves, who, from his Description of their Duty, and the Motives to

* Job xxxiv. 18.

it,

it, could readily frame a Judgment of their own Defects, and what they might expect from them. SERM. II.

Mean while, if the Applications of the Clergy are leſs plain and particular; moſt highly it concerns the People, to be very ſtrict and ſevere in applying to themſelves. When they hear any inſtance of their Duty deſcribed, or any Enormity pointed out and condemn'd; let them ſeriouſly lay their hand upon their Breaſt, and enquire (as they may quickly do,) Am I poſſeſs'd of this Virtue? or am I guilty of that Sin? Let them remember, that their eternal Intereſt depends upon it. Then let them go on to improve and brighten what they find to be well, to correct and alter what may be amiſs; that ſo praying to God for the aſſiſtance of his Grace, and *receiving with meekneſs* his *engrafted word, it may* indeed *be able to ſave their ſouls.* Even *Felix* himſelf was by this Method convinced of his Sin, and trembled at the Expectation of the horrible Vengeance which was due to it. And this Remark would lead me to the THIRD General Head propoſed, namely, the Effect which the Apoſtle's *Sermon* had upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him, *Felix trembled.* But That I reſerve, for the Subject of another Diſcourſe. *Now to God*, &c.

SER-

SERMON III.

Conviction *the result of* St. PAUL's Preaching.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

SERM. III.

—I Go on now in order to the THIRD General Head proposed, namely, the Effect which St *Paul*'s Discourse had upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him; *Felix trembled.* And under this Head I shall have a fit occasion to observe,

1. The Connexion there was between the Apostle's Discourse, and the Governor's Conviction, or the Tendency which the *one* had to produce the *other.*

2. The farther Tendency, which this Conviction had, to have produced in the Governor a true and real Reformation. And,

3. The Insignificance and Worthlesness of such Convictions, when they prove abortive

tive and unfruitful, and are not attended with any ſubſequent Amendment. SERM. III.

1. *Firſt* then, we may obſerve the Connexion there was between the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe, and the Governor's Conviction; or the Tendency which the *one* had to produce the *other*.

This now appears, in good meaſure, from what was ſaid before, of the Character of *Felix*, and the preaching of St. *Paul*. The *one* had been guilty of great Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, in the Adminiſtration of his high Office; and likewiſe of great Lewdneſs and Incontinence, in his private and perſonal Capacity. The *other*, for that reaſon, choſe to level his Diſcourſe againſt the Practice of theſe Vices, by recommending the oppoſite Virtues, as moſt juſt and rational. And to make it ſink the deeper into his guilty Hearer, he added the ſtrongeſt Motive that can be urged, to influence our Practice; the Conſideration of a future Judgment: when the ſtricteſt enquiry ſhall be made into our paſt Conduct; and the *Wicked ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment, but the Righteous into life eternal.*

Felix, in all this, could not but make a ſecret Application, and find his own Intereſt to be nearly concern'd. He was conſcious to himſelf, of his own Lewdneſs and Injuſtice; and how defective he had been in thoſe Duties, of *Righteouſneſs* and *Temperance*, which the Apoſtle had inculcated. This probably would make him

SERM. III. him eager to attend to the Conſequence of ſuch Behaviour: and when he heard the terrible Vengeance that was due to his Tranſgreſſions; 'tis no wonder, if ſuch unexpected News ſhould ſtartle and ſurpriſe the Sinner, and ſtrike him with a ſudden Conſternation. *He trembled* therefore, ſays the Text, or was full of Dread and Terror; and whatever were his love of Wickedneſs, could no longer diſſemble the inward Pangs and Anguiſh of his Mind, the fearful Forebodings of eternal Miſery. Our natural notions both of God and ourſelves, do teach us to expect, he ſhould bear a due regard to the Honour of his Laws, and ſeverely puniſh the Neglect or Violation of them. But theſe natural Principles, of themſelves, are apt to make but ſlight Impreſſions; we eaſily paſs by and overlook them, and the *Heathen* world, (however theſe Truths might be legible to upright Reaſon in the Book of Nature,) had at beſt but faint, imperfect notions of them; they rarely read or underſtood them; and wanted a farther Guide, a more explicit Revelation, to imprint anew, and more earneſtly enforce them.

Felix had before, the Light of natural Reaſon for his Guide; But he had ſo given himſelf up to the government of his predominant Affections, that the voice of Reaſon was too low to divert or reclaim him from his Wickedneſs: and whilſt the Impetus, which bore him down, was ſtrong and violent, he rare-

ly

ly attended to the dictates of that gentle Monitor, which utter'd itself with so weak an accent as scarce to be observ'd. The Mind must be sedate and calm, and the hurry of the Passions must be laid, before the Principles of Reason can be well attended to, or its Commands can be obey'd. But when a superior Principle comes in, and the same things, which Reason faintly teaches, are anew explain'd and enforced, and deliver'd as the Oracles of God; this awakens the dull drowsy Sinner; this adds new force and energy to the Powers of Reason, and recommends the Principles of natural Light with an evidence difficult to be resisted. *Felix*, as much as he had neglected the Religion and Laws of Nature; yet, when he came to enquire into the Religion of Christ, and found his natural Principles confirm'd by this new Revelation; this startled and surprized him with the sense of his Guilt, and expectation of severe Punishment. He might not be immediately convinced of the whole Truth of *Christianity*: But yet, when he heard such Doctrines deliver'd as these, which struck in with his own notions and sentiments of things; he wanted not much thought and recollection to approve their Truth, and give Testimony to them. SERM. III.

They were Doctrines, of which he could not pretend perfect Ignorance; they had only lain buried in silence and oblivion, and were

now

SERM. III. now powerfully raised out of the Rubbish that had cover'd them, and brought to clearer Light. *The word of God*, (says the Apostle) *is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edg'd sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* *. So it was to *Felix*, who *trembled* at the preaching of this Word; and however he had sinn'd securely against the voice of Nature; yet now was alarm'd with the sight both of his Sin and Danger; and dreaded the scene, his Prisoner had open'd to him.

Nor is it strange, that the Persuasion of a future Judgment, should produce so great an Effect. For what can possibly affect us with a stronger influence than this Consideration, that the all-seeing GOD, and supreme Governor of all, *will* one day *bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; that we must all appear before the Tribunal of that infinite Judge, who is not to be perplex'd with the nicety of Circumstances, nor confounded with the multitude of Causes, nor kept ignorant for want of Evidence? Cited before this Tribunal, which way should the Sinner or Transgressor of his Laws hope to escape his Vengeance? Can he bribe the Judge to pass a favourable Sentence, or to prevent

* Heb. iv. 12.

the Execution of a right one? Alas, but he has no Power, and his Judge has no Neceſſity: it is profeſſedly the deſign of his Enquiry, to diſpenſe Juſtice with an equal and impartial hand, and *give to every man according as his work ſhall be.* This may be matter of great Joy and Comfort to them, who have been careful to approve their Conſciences before him; who have given *all diligence to make their calling and election ſure; and with fear and trembling to work out their ſalvation.* But to them, who have been negligent and diſobedient, it muſt be matter of Confuſion and Aſtoniſhment; becauſe it propoſes certain and moſt direful Vengeance, as the Reward of their Impiety. SERM. III.

From hence then, it is obſervable, that the Joy of wicked Men, and the Pleaſure which they take in Sin, (be it never ſo elevating for the time it laſts) does very often meet with interruption, with ſuch Convictions and Deſpondencies, as make them melancholy and penſive; ſuch as blaſt the ſeemingly pleaſant fruit of their Tranſgreſſions, and make it even cumberſome and uneaſy to them; 'till another (it may be, another *ſinful*) object diverts the force of the Conviction. If they be leſs apt to reflect of themſelves, there ſhall happen ſomething from without to drive them to Reflection.

The hand-writing on the wall ſurprized *Belſhazzar* in the midſt of all his Grandeur and

SERM. III. and Jollity, and put him in such a fit of trembling, that *his knees smote one against another.* In like manner *Felix* sat in state with his Adulteress, when he sent for the Prisoner at his bar, to entertain them with some account of his Religion. And then, which he little expected, this matter of Curiosity grew into Earnest, and the Truths deliver'd by the Prisoner so reach'd his case, and open'd to him such a scene of Woe; that he could not but tremble at the melancholy prospect, and frightful apprehension of it. And thus far of the Connexion there was between the Apostle's Discourse, and the Governor's Conviction; or the tendency which the *one* had to produce the *other:* which was the *first* thing proposed to be consider'd under this Head: Proceed we hence in order, in the next place, or,

2. *Secondly*, to observe the farther tendency which this Conviction had, to have produced in the Governor a true and real Reformation. Now here, before all things, it is manifest, that there can be no grounds to expect the Reformation of a Sinner, 'till he is first made sensible of the nature of his Crime, and its inconsistency with that Law, which is given to direct his Practice. For what should induce him to alter that Behaviour, which is grateful to his Appetite; but the proposal of some superior Law, by which his Appetite should be restrain'd and govern'd? And there-

fore thus far it appears neceſſary, for the Apoſtle to lay down thoſe rules of *Righteouſneſs* and *Temperance*, which the Governor had violated; if he meant to ſhew him the obliquity of his practice, and reclaim him from the error of his way. But yet neither was this ſufficient: the moſt powerful incentives of human actions are Hopes and Fears; and the Apoſtle, for that reaſon, mentioned the conſideration of a future Judgment, as moſt proper to alarm the Governor with Fears of dreadful Vengeance; or, by degrees, perhaps, to kindle up the Hopes of Immortality. SERM. III.

The Conceptions of habitual Sinners are uſually ſo groſs and ſenſual, that they are but little affected with the deſcriptions of ſpiritual Happineſs, or the abſtracted lovelineſs of Virtue: and therefore thoſe conſiderations are rather uſeful, to encourage the virtuous, than to reclaim the vicious. But the thoughts of Pain and Miſery do more ſenſibly affect them; and however they may oftentimes be deaf to the allurements of future Glory; yet the denunciation of eternal Vengeance has a ſtronger Influence; and even *Felix trembled*, when he heard *the terrors of the Lord* denounced, by the mouth of an Apoſtle.

This might naturally put him upon enquiring, how to eſcape the Terrors, which he fear'd ſo much. And That, upon enquiry, he would find to be no otherwiſe, than by forſaking thoſe evil courſes, againſt which they

SERM. III. are denounced. Was it then, upon account of his Injuſtice and Intemperance, that he dreaded the conſequence of that future Judgment, and the ſtrict ſcrutiny which ſhould be made into his Conduct: 'Twas beſt for him to reform, before that Judgment overtook him; and apply himſelf to the ſerious practice of thoſe Rules of *Righteouſneſs* and *Temperance*, which the Apoſtle preached; and which the Judge, in that day of Retribution, would be ſure to applaud. If he *trembled* at the expectation of his direful Vengeance; it was his wiſeſt courſe to betake him to thoſe Methods of life which might recommend him to his Mercy: and however God might have winked at his former times of Ignorance; yet now, that his conſcience was awakened by Conviction, and he ſaw both the Sinfulneſs and Danger of his ways, he had leſs to plead in his excuſe; his motives to Amendment were more ſtrong and powerful.

All this while, indeed, he proceeds only upon the ſlaviſh principle of Fear; He fears God only as a Judge, whom 'tis his intereſt to ſerve, becauſe he will ſeverely puniſh and revenge his Diſobedience; not as an indulgent Father, who is kind even to the wicked and unthankful; and whoſe righteous laws he cannot diſobey without the higheſt Ingratitude. But where the former kind of Fear prevails for a compliance, tho' That, at firſt, may not be virtuous, as not being built upon gene-

generous and worthy Principles; yet in time it will eaſily improve into a habit of Virtue: and the whole frame and temper of the Mind would be fitted (as it were) to the practice of thoſe Duties, to which it would be then inured. From beholding God therefore as our Judge, we ſhould come to own him as our Father; and our diſtruſting, deſponding, ſlaviſh Fear would be alter'd by degrees (with the temper of our Mind) into a confiding, filial, reverential one. SERM. III.

Some regards to our *own* Intereſt and Happineſs will always be preſerved: nor does our Religion at all aim to exclude them utterly; but rather binds them upon us with the ſtricteſt obligations, by repreſenting *the ſalvation of our Souls*, as *the End of our Faith*, the object of our Hope, and the foundation of our Joy. But then our motives to good will not begin and terminate at home; our views will by degrees be more enlarged; and what we might do at firſt, only from ſelfiſh conſiderations; we ſhall be induced afterwards to do, in regard to the Glory of God, and in obedience to his Laws.

'Tis not to be expected, that a thorough change ſhould be produced at once. A long habit of Sin is not ſo eaſily reformed. The *firſt* ſhock may prepare and diſpoſe men for *impreſſions* of Religion; But they muſt have *time* to ripen into ſettled Piety, and grow into fixed Habits and a ſerious love of Virtue.

SERM. III. And thus far, of the Tendency of the Governor's Conviction, to have produced in him a true and real Reformation. It remains for me now only,

3. *Thirdly*, in the last place, to observe the insignificance and worthlessness of such Convictions, when they prove abortive and unfruitful, and are not attended with any subsequent Amendment.

It is the sport of none but cruel Tyrants, to be pleased with the groans and outcries of the miserable. And tho' it be necessary, to the Ends of Justice, to inflict Punishment upon the guilty; yet their barely shrinking at the prospect of that Punishment, can never wipe off the guilt, that has demanded it, without a thorough change and renovation of Mind, and dereliction of those former courses, by which That guilt has been contracted.

The man must be harden'd beyond all example, who can behold the Misery, to which his Sin exposes him, without any emotion or concern of Mind. But is it reasonable, that such emotion or concern, arising wholly from his love of Ease and Pleasure, and vanishing as soon as he could drive out the melancholy Reflection; is it reasonable, that this should excuse him before God, or avail for the Pardon of those Sins, which it cannot alienate him from?

Judas's

Judas's Conviction was as ſharp as poſſible; He little thought his treachery ſhould have had ſo diſmal an effect; He was ſenſible of the Sin he had committed in betraying *innocent blood*; and he went ſo far towards making reparation, as to deſpiſe *the wages of unrighteouſneſs* he had receiv'd, and carry back the *thirty pieces of ſilver* to the Chief Prieſts. But all this ſerv'd only to torture and afflict him with the ſenſe of his Guilt; it brought not his Mind in ſubjection to the Law of God; it produced not the fruits of Righteouſneſs and Peace; but concluded in the utmoſt Horror and Deſpair, and an unnatural Violence offered to himſelf. It was not then the grief and anguiſh of his Mind, which could approve him innocent, or expiate his Guilt: he was ſo certainly reſerved for farther Vengeance, that, (as our bleſſed Saviour himſelf pronounced) *it had been good for that man, if he had never been born.* SERM. III.

The Devils, again, are ſenſible of the nature of their Crime, as well as of the Miſeries which they at preſent feel, or expect hereafter to endure. They know, that they are *reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day.* This therefore they *believe, and tremble*, ſays St. *James*; they are ſtruck with Dread and Horror, as *Felix* in the Text. But they are paſt the time of their Probation, and without all hopes of Amendment. Therefore their Grief

SERM. III. and Terror may encreaſe their Miſery; but cannot mitigate their Guilt. They can look back upon that Glory, which they once enjoyed, and know how to eſtimate a loſs, which can never be retrieved. They can look forward likewiſe, to that future Judgment, which can no way be avoided; and know, that *everlaſting fire* is from of old *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* They can look up to the Divine Majeſty they have offended and provoked: And they can look downwards too, and ſee Mankind preferred before themſelves. The whole Creation round them furniſhes new matter of Torment and Vexation; and whilſt they curſe the Sin, which brought them to this miſery; they are ſo far from forſaking, that with the utmoſt Rage and Deſperation they continue to increaſe it. Whilſt thus, without hope of Mitigation or End, they reflect on their wretched and deplorable Eſtate, they muſt have all Hell and Confuſion in themſelves; and their Grief can have no other Effect, but to aggravate their Miſery.

From their Example we perceive, how little that Sorrow can avail us, which brings not forth *fruits meet for repentance*; which worketh not *repentance unto ſalvation, not to be repented of.* The anguiſh of the Mind is no otherwiſe to be deſired, than as it tends to the mortifying Sin in us; and to our Improvement and Growth in Virtue. Where it

it fails of these Effects; it can never recommend us to the favour of God, or be of any real benefit and service to us. It is so far well, to be affected with *the terrors of the Lord*; and when a man is softened by the prospect of future Judgment, there may be some hopes of reclaiming him from *the error of his way*. Whereas They are past all hope of recovery, who are deaf to the Threatnings of Vengeance, as well as Promises of Mercy; and even *Felix* himself shall rise up in Judgment to condemn *such* incorrigible Sinners. SERM. III.

The first step towards Amendment, is to be sensible and sorry for our Sin. But if we desire to receive any Advantage from that Sorrow; it should not only have respect to what is past: but we must let it have a farther Influence upon our future Conduct; and shew, that our fears are not so purely mercenary, as to make us only shrink at the Miseries we are to suffer; without being active and vigorous enough, to bring forth fruit in the Obedience of our lives. The Fear of Punishment may be a Motive to Obedience, but will never be accepted in its stead.

'Twas here that the Governor's Conviction was defective; it was strong and vehement in itself; it affected him in such manner as he knew not how to disguise; it even made him *tremble*, and disorder'd his Spirits with a horrible Dread. But his long Continuance in Sin, had made it difficult for him to leave

SERM. III. it; his habits of Vice now grown inveterate, and confirmed by cuſtom, were not to be ſhaken off at once; his Injuſtice and Extortion, his Lewdneſs and Incontinence had ſo engaged all the powers of his Body and Mind, that it was really a matter for much time and application, ſo to diſengage and unhinge them all, as might give reaſonable Hopes of reclaiming him from ſuch foul Enormities, and perſuading him to the oppoſite Practice of Righteouſneſs and Temperance, from the Conſideration of a Judgment to come. But the Governor was too violently led, or hurried by his Paſſions, to allow ſuch time and application; and to engage in this matter with a ſuitable Vigour and Reſolution of Mind. Rather than forſake the Sins he had ſo long indulged, he choſe to divert the unwelcome Reflection on their pernicious Conſequences, and diſmiſs the Apoſtle, who had led him to it.

And this would bring me, in order, to the FOURTH and laſt General Head propoſed, *viz.* the Governor's manner of ſtifling his Conviction with theſe Words; *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient ſeaſon I will call for thee.* But That I reſerve, for the Subject of another Diſcourſe.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

SER-

SERMON IV.

Delays of Reformation, *fooliſh and dangerous.*

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and anſwer'd, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee.

IN theſe words we have a ſuccinct account of the rational Diſcourſe made by an *innocent* Priſoner before his *guilty* Judge. The clear and eaſy Method, which he uſed on this occaſion, as fitteſt to convince and perſuade;—the neceſſity of the Duties he inculcated, whether as founded upon natural or Chriſtian Principles;—the Importance of the Motive, by which he would enforce them, taken from the certainty of a future ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments, and that impartial Judgment which ſhall be previous to it;—the ſuitableneſs of all this to the condition of his Hearer, who being mightily defective in the Duties recommended, guilty of Corruption and Injuſtice in the adminiſtra-

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. tion of his high Office, as well as of Lewdneſs and Incontinence in his private Conduct, had reaſon to apprehend the conſequence of this future Judgment, and expect That Recompence of his Vices which was meet;—the Effect which the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe had accordingly upon the Governor, and the Conviction it wrought in him, by bringing him to a ſenſe both of his Sin and Danger, and making him tremble at the frightful Proſpect:—All theſe Particulars, of great Uſe and Importance to direct us in the Conduct of our life, and imprint a juſt ſenſe of Religion on our Minds, I have lately offer'd in this place as the ſubject of our Meditations. And from all this put together, one would be apt to conceive ſome hopes, that *Felix* might be afterwards a better man; and however he had formerly been ſtupified with the Lethargy of Sin; yet now that his Conſcience was awaken'd by Conviction, and that Conviction ſtrengthen'd by ſuch ſolid Reaſonings, his future Conduct ſhould be ſuitable to ſuch Conviction; he ſhould forſake the Sins, which put him in ſuch fear, and embrace the Virtues, which might give him ſatisfaction.

But alas, the Event was otherwiſe; he had not courage to reſiſt the Paſſions he was wont to obey; he was not able to deny the Appetites, which he had uſed to gratify: He choſe therefore to quiet his Conſcience, by pro-

prolonging the time; he put off his compli- SERM.
ance with the Apoſtle's Counſel, till his IV.
Conviction might grow cool upon his hands; and the Impreſſions, he had lately received, by degrees wear out. And This was what I mention'd as the

IV. FOURTH and laſt thing obſervable in the Text, namely, the Governor's manner of ſtifling his Conviction with theſe words, *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee.*

He did not pretend to except againſt his Doctrine, or be angry at the Freedoms he took; but only gave himſelf the air, as if he thought he had heard enough for once; and had better diſmiſs him for the preſent, till he ſhould have more leiſure, or be leſs fatigued, and ſo better capable of attending to his Preaching. From hence then we have a fit occaſion to obſerve,

1. The uſual Practice of habitual Sinners, under the power of Conviction; to neglect the *preſent* means of Grace, and defer their thoughts of Repentance and Reformation, to ſome *future* Opportunity.

2. The great Folly and Danger of ſuch Delays.

3. The great Wiſdom and Neceſſity of a ſpeedy Execution in matters, of ſo great Weight and Concern.

1. *Firſt*

SERM. IV.

1. *First* then, from this Example of *Felix*, I would obſerve to you the uſual Practice of habitual Sinners, under the power of Conviction; to neglect the preſent means of Grace, and defer their thoughts of Repentance and Reformation to ſome future opportunity.

Tho' the dictates of Reaſon are ever on the ſide of Virtue and Religion, ſo that it might naturally be expected of reaſonable Creatures, to conduct their behaviour by the maxims of Virtue; yet alas, the tendencies of Senſe are oppoſite, and our Minds are ſo clogg'd and oppreſs'd with the incumbrance of theſe frail bodies, that they are forward in conſenting to the motions of Concupiſcence, and backward ſo much, as to conſider any thing that contradicts them. We cannot but perceive in ourſelves a ſtrong and moſt prevailing tendency to ill, which requires not long thought and obſervation to diſcover itſelf to us; but has gotten ſuch poſſeſſion of our Wills and Affections, that whilſt it is eaſily perceiv'd, it will be hard to conquer and ſubdue it. And here it is, that nature ſhrinks at the unpleaſant undertaking. To reſiſt natural Appetites, and deny ourſelves thoſe things, which are moſt grateful and agreeable to the motions and deſires of our Mind, muſt have ſomething in it uneaſy and diſcouraging. The more ſedately we think and conſider of theſe things, the reaſon and the conſequen-

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ces of them; the more rational, no doubt, SERM. it will appear to engage in ſo difficult an En- IV. terprize. But even to conſider of things contrary to Inclination, is unpleaſant and uneaſy. We often therefore ſuffer ourſelves to be ſway'd by the bias of Affection; and are too negligent to obſerve, or too ſlothful to obey the voice of Reaſon. The longer ſuch Inclinations have poſſeſs'd and govern'd us, the more they will confirm themſelves, and be twiſted in ſuch manner, and entangled (as it were) with our very compoſition, as will mightily increaſe the difficulty of diſcarding and forſaking them.

Whilſt thus by nature we incline to ſin, and inſtead of being active to reſiſt, do ſluggiſhly give way to Inclination; it cannot fail being a great impediment to our correcting this misfortune of Nature, that the objects of religious Hope and Fear are abſent and inviſible, whereas thoſe of ſenſe are always preſent to our views, and the motives recommending them continually before us. The world with its vanities ſteals in upon the Soul, through all the avenues of Senſe; and ſhews itſelf grateful to thoſe Affections and Luſts, which our original Depravity has planted in us. The Splendor and Gaieties of life; the Riches or Honours of this world; the various Amuſements to withdraw our Minds; and Entertainments ſuited to every Deſire; the Example, Company, and Perſuaſions of ill men; the Wit, the Humour and the Air, by which they recommend their Vices,

SERM. IV. Vices, and either kindle in ſpectators a new flame of Imitation, or blow up the old one to a greater height: I need not ſay, how all This muſt obſtruct the Reformation of evil Habits; and inſtead of mortifying Sin in us, will rather increaſe and ſtrengthen and ſupport its Empire.

And yet, great as the difficulty may appear from the Luſts of the Fleſh, and the vain Solicitations of the world; it is ſtill made much greater, by the ſubtle ſuggeſtions of another Enemy, who ſtudies to ruin by deceiving us. The Devil can eaſily acquaint himſelf ſo far, with the Conſtitution of our Body, and the Temper of our Mind, as to perceive what Appetite or Paſſion is moſt imperious; and then ſuit his Temptations to *that* Deſire, which he ſees to be predominant, and difficult to be reſiſted. In what manner, he communicates his Poiſon to us, whether by ſuch ſecret whiſpers as infect the Soul, without its knowledge; or by putting the Spirits in ſuch motion, as may preſent the images which he deſigns; or in ſome other manner, which we know not how to explain, we need not be ſolicitous to enquire; ſince the Oracles of God aſſure us of the fact, that it is Satan, who fills our Hearts with evil Diſpoſitions, to incline us to the practice of Sin. By the Sagacity of his nature, and his long Experience, he knows well how to attempt our Paſſions, and ſupply us with fit objects to exerciſe them on,

on. And he has Malice enough to uſe his utmoſt ſkill and power to ſeduce or betray us to a Partnerſhip in Guilt, that ſo we may be ſharers likewiſe in his Puniſhment; in that *everlaſting fire*, which is from of old *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Such reaſon is there from his Malice, his Cunning and his Strength, to eſteem him a moſt dangerous and common Adverſary; who as *a roaring Lion*, reſtleſs and outragious, *walketh up and down* continually, *ſeeking whom he may devour.* SERM. IV.

Now from all this put together, the united force of our three ſpiritual Enemies, who court and allure us under the name of Friends, and recommend Sin to us as moſt lovely and agreeable; the Infirmity of the Fleſh, with its ſinful Appetites and Affections; the Gaieties of life, and vain ſolicitations of the world; the Policy of Satan, and his wicked Suggeſtions: from all theſe Allurements combined together, it is eaſy to account for the general Depravity of human kind; and aſſign an obvious reaſon, why men are ſo commonly addicted to the practice of Vice, and ſo little in love with that which is moſt truly amiable. For altho' if they would ſeriouſly reflect and freely uſe their Reaſon, the difficulties to be conquer'd, where the End is moſt deſirable, ſhould make them but the more earneſt and diligent in their Endeavours; yet ſuch is the Corruption of our Nature, ſo unhappily en-

SERM. IV. flamed by thoſe Objects, with which the world continually preſents us, and blown up by the Craft and Subtilty of Satan; that they, who have any long time been engaged in the habitual practice of Sin, have their Minds ſo poſſeſs'd with the love and farther deſire of it, that they are apt to deſpiſe the Precepts of Virtue and Religion, and will rarely take the trouble to reflect upon them with Coolneſs and Sobriety.

Yet ſometimes it ſo happens, whether from ſome preſent want of diverſion and amuſement; from weakneſs of body, or ſome notable accident that has befallen them; from the Example or Diſcourſe of others; or from the more immediate appointment of God, who condeſcends to make them this farther offer of his Grace: I ſay *ſometimes*, (I believe *oftentimes*) it ſo happens, that the hardieſt Sinners are tormented with an inward Uneaſineſs, terrified with the Guilt, and wrack'd with the Convictions of their own Minds. This was the caſe of *Felix* in the Text, who was brought to *tremble* on the Bench before the Priſoner at his Bar; and ſtruck with a moſt fearful apprehenſion of the Vengeance which awaited him.

Here then, is a moſt violent ſtruggle between Reaſon and Affection; *this* inclines to Vice for the ſake of preſent Satisfaction, whilſt *that* deters from it with the Menaces of future Pain; and recommends the Practice of

of Virtue, with unspeakable Advantages. Thus doubtfully divided, 'tis no wonder if the Sinner *tremble*, and think on various Expedients to remove the galling Uneasiness of such Reflections. Sometimes, the Impossibility of Repentance shall be urged, or the Unpardonableness of Sin, to harden his Mind against the thoughts of that Misery, which cannot be avoided. At other times, the Mercy of God, and Satisfaction of *Christ*, shall be represented thro' such false mediums to his View, as to leave him full License and Scope to live at random; and take off all Necessity of virtuous living, or repenting of the contrary. Thus shall Repentance be a needless Labour, as the Sinner is in mood: who either way is kept from returning to his Duty; either hoisted to Presumption, or sunk into Despair. SERM. IV.

When these Delusions are successless, (as they cannot always succeed, the Conviction is too strong, the Truths of Religion are too clear and manifest) it remains then for the Sinner to flatter his Conscience, with fair Vows and Promises; and make it more quiet and easy for the present, by giving it assurance of better Satisfaction in the time to come. The present Heat of Passion, and Violence of Appetite, demand his present Attention; nor is he at leisure to obey the *law of his mind*, 'till this *law in his members* shall be less imperious. But when the Hur-

SERM. VI. ry he is now in ſhall abate; he may be better able to provide againſt future Aſſaults. It may be too, he is under ſome Neceſſity of obliging his Friends; and if that does not draw him (as ſometimes it may) to any criminal Compliances; it will however require ſo much Time and Application, that he has not leiſure to apply himſelf to ſerious Thoughts; to correct the ill Habits that have grown upon him, and humble himſelf duly before God. But ſuch Neceſſity, he hopes, will not always laſt; the Hurry he is in will be ſhortly over; and then he ſhall have better Opportunity, and a more convenient Seaſon, to do as Conſcience ſhall perſuade him, and act according to the force of his Conviction. Nay, the Station which he bears in Life, the Nature of his Employment, or the Duty of his Office, ſhall ſometimes be urged, to repreſent it as incumbent on him, to forbear any immediate Application to other Buſineſs, and require his whole Thought and Study to be exerciſed in That. But when he is more at leiſure, he will be as ready to attend to the other Precepts of Religion, as he is at preſent to the Buſineſs of his Station, which the Precepts of Religion have obliged him to.

'Twas upon theſe, or the like Grounds, that *Felix* diſmiſſed his Priſoner, and deferred his Hearing to ſome future Opportunity. But how vain, alas! are ſuch Excuſes as theſe: like

like those of the Persons invited to the Marriage in the Gospel; whom the Lord thought unworthy of any farther Favour or Tenders of his Grace. From whence it will be proper to observe, in the SERM. IV.

2. *Second* Place, the great Folly and Danger of such Delays, such trifling Procrastination and deferring of Repentance and Amendment of life. Now here, before all things, it is manifest, that *that* Business should be done instantly and out of hand, which is of greatest Consequence; and that we ought not to let any thing of less Moment justle out that, which is a matter of the last Importance: above all, that we should not admit of any thing in the mean time, which is any way inconsistent or opposite unto it; and will therefore increase the Labour and Difficulty of it afterwards.

By these Rules then, let us examine the Wisdom of his choice, who at present labours under the Guilt of Sin, and defers his Repentance to a future more *convenient Season.* Are the motions then of carnal Appetite of greater Moment or Concern to him, than the Laws of Reason and Revelation; that They must have the Preference in his Esteem, and be regarded in the first place? Can his Gratitude to Friends extend so far, as that he should forget to be a Friend to himself; and for the sake of laying upon them some trifling Obligation, should increase the Burthen of his

SERM IV. own Guilt, and Obligation to ſevereſt Puniſhment? Or can any Employment or Buſineſs in Life, outweigh the Buſineſs of his eternal Salvation; that This ſhould be poſtponed to the bare *expedience* or (what he calls) *neceſſity* of That? Alas! he cannot ſay it, he will not pretend it; his Conſcience ſtings and makes him own the contrary! Only he would huſh and quiet it, with vain Purpoſes of reconciling both together; of yielding to *Sin* under the preſent Neceſſity; and of attending to *Virtue*, when that Neceſſity is over; when his Paſſions ſhall be leſs impetuous, and leiſure will permit.

And here then certainly, is a moſt flagrant Proof of his egregious Folly; that he ſhould own the Buſineſs of Religion to be of the *greateſt* Importance, and yet make it give way to that which confeſſedly is of *leſs!* that he ſhould ſee how his trueſt Intereſt and trueſt Pleaſure are wound together with his Duty in the ways of Virtue; and yet wildly wander from them all, thro' diſtant paths, which carry him ſtill farther off, and terminate in Death! Is he ſure of extending his Life to any future Opportunity? or rather, is not the Thread of Life ſo very doubtful and uncertain, that 'tis every moment liable to be cut off, and no time, beyond the preſent, our own; which paſſes ſo ſwiftly by us, that 'tis gone ere we can ſpeak; and no more in our power, than the Ages that paſt before we were

were born, or to come after our deceaſe? Is he ſure again, of the Uſe of his Reaſon to the End of his Life? or may not the want of that diſqualify him for the Work he purpoſes? Or ſuppoſe both his Life and his Faculties continued, yet what ground to expect, that his Diſpoſitions ſhould be better, and more pliable hereafter; that another Opportunity ſhould ſerve him better than the preſent; that the Rules of Religion ſhould appear more eaſy and practicable to him, when he has been longer habituated and inured to Vice? Will Gratification and Indulgence abate the Edge of his Deſire? Will his Habits grow weaker by ſubmitting to them, and loſe their power by a long Continuance? Or will they not rather be confirmed and gather Strength, and with much more difficulty be rooted out? SERM. IV.

Say then, (what may be greatly doubted) that he ſincerely purpoſes the Repentance which he vows; yet is it any Argument of his Wiſdom, (when 'tis the Labour and Difficulty of that Repentance, which frights him from it *now*,) that he chooſes to increaſe that Difficulty by deferring it; and rather than indure a preſent Trouble, much eaſier ſurmounted, will raſhly multiply his future Cares; and ſwell the *River* that he fears, into a *Sea* of Grief? Does he really expect any State of Life hereafter; when he ſhall no way be expoſed to Temptations from his

SERM. IV. Duty? Alas! but every State of Life is ſurrounded with Temptations; and he who cannot mind his Duty, till he meets with nothing to ſeduce him from it; muſt for ever put it off with the ſame or like Excuſes; and wait for ſuch an Opportunity as will never occur.

Beſides, ſuppoſing ſuch Exemption from Trial to be poſſible, in this State of Probation; yet, if he can never keep within the Rules of his Duty, but only when he perceives no Temptation to the contrary; This has not the Nature, nor can it intitle him to the Reward of Virtue. It is the Privilege of the Bleſſed above, to be freed from Temptations, becauſe they have withſtood them. But they who have always yielded and complied, have no reaſon to expect ſuch Happineſs. Their Minds are altogether vitiated and depraved; and 'tis but juſt with God, that what of choice they make their Crime, ſhould of neceſſity become their Puniſhment.

But ſay, whatever be the Difficulty, they reſolve hereafter to encounter it. Alas! But they, who are unable to ſtruggle with a leſs Difficulty, will be ſtill leſs able to engage a greater! Their Purpoſes too will grow cool upon their hands; and Conſcience, which now ſtings and ſpurs them on to Duty, may by long Dalliance be laid aſleep, and forget the Dangers, with which it uſed to terrify them. And yet there is one thing worſe than

than all the reſt; their continued Provoca- SERM.
tions under the Advantage of the cleareſt IV.
Light, againſt the frequent Warnings and
Convictions of Conſcience, may provoke
God in the end, to withdraw the Influences
of his good Spirit; and leave them to the
Guidance of thoſe Luſts, which they have
choſe to follow. So our bleſſed Saviour
threatened thoſe Churches in the *Revelation*,
that had departed from their *firſt Love*, and
remitted of their Zeal in Religion; that unleſs
they turned and repented, he would *remove*
their *Candleſtick out of his place*, and take
from them, thoſe Opportunities and Means of
Grace, which they ſo ungratefully deſpiſed
and abuſed.

In like manner to the *Jews* (who, beſides
the Writings of *Moſes* and the following Pro-
phets, and all thoſe manifold advantages which
attended them as the Church or choſen of
God; were not to be reclaim'd by the ſtu-
pendous Miracles and heavenly Doctrine of
the Son of God; to Them) did he expreſ-
ly declare, that *the Kingdom of God*, thoſe
means of Grace and offers of Salvation, which
belong to his Church, *ſhould be taken from
them, and given to a nation bringing forth the
fruits thereof.*

The ſame Meaſure, which is uſed with So-
cieties and whole Kingdoms, is in its due pro-
portion extended to particular perſons; and
they likewiſe may juſtly be deliver'd to a re-

SERM. IV. probate Senſe, whom neither Judgments nor Mercies could excite to the Practice of their Duty. The outward Means may be continued to them, whilſt they are Members of a Community; where all have not ſo filled up the Meaſure of their Iniquity, as to be finally rejected. But thoſe outward means of Salvation will want the inward workings of the Spirit to render them effectual; and theſe, tho' at firſt propoſed indifferently to all, may yet be judicially withheld from ſuch as do but *turn the Grace of God into wantonneſs*, and make thoſe things, which were deſign'd for their Welfare, become an occaſion of their greater Condemnation.

For a farther Illuſtration of what has been ſaid upon this Subject; let *Felix*'s Example be once more ſet before us. This Sermon of St. *Paul* was a new method of Inſtruction, which laid him under ſtricter obligations to Virtue, than he knew before; and the force of his Conviction ſufficiently teſtified the Benefit of the Apoſtle's preaching. The Governor however was too ſtrongly habituated and attach'd to Sin, to ſubſcribe ſo eaſily to theſe new Rules of living; and therefore was for ſhuffling off the matter for the preſent, till ſome fitter opportunity ſhould occur, for his enquiring more particularly into the Doctrine of his Priſoner. *Go thy way* (ſays he) *for this time; when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee.* But do we hear any more

of

of that *convenient Seaſon?* Alas, it is to be feár'd he thought but little farther of the matter; and rather than improve his Conviction to any good Purpoſe, he choſe thus to let it die, by ſtifling and deferring it. SERM. IV.

It is true, he often ſent for the Apoſtle afterwards. But was it with a purpoſe to improve by his Diſcourſe? Was it, becauſe *that* opportunity was come, when he could conveniently attend to him? No; but for a reaſon widely different: it was, that he might give his Priſoner opportunity, to offer him ſome Bribe or Ranſom for his Liberty. And when the Integrity of the Apoſtle diſappointed the corrupt Expectation of the Judge; he was ſo far from acquitting the Priſoner, whom he found innocent, that he confined him two whole years in Priſon: and at laſt, when he reſign'd his Office, left him ſtill in Bonds; for no better reaſon (the holy Text aſſures us) than to gratify the *Jews*, that had accuſed him.

And were theſe then, the Fruits and Signs of his Repentance? Was this, the Effect of that vehement Concern, that Trembling and Amazement, which the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe of the neceſſity of Righteouſneſs, and the certainty of future Judgment had occaſion'd in him? You ſee, he was ſtill unrighteous as before; he abuſed his Power to oppreſs the innocent; he expected, he was ready to receive Bribes; and would not be otherwiſe induced

SERM. IV. duced to pronounce a right and an impartial Sentence. Such was the fatal Conſequence of his Delay; and the ſame Conſequence is greatly to be fear'd in others, from the ſame Behaviour. From whence I would hope it ſhould be no hard matter, in the

3. *Third* and laſt place, to deduce the great Wiſdom and Neceſſity of a ſpeedy Execution in matters of ſo great weight and concern. It is uſual for Things to illuſtrate and diſplay their Contraries. From the Folly and Unreaſonableneſs of all dilatory Excuſes, it is natural to infer the Wiſdom of a ſpeedy Repentance. From the manifold Danger of delaying it, whether in reſpect of our Life, which is tranſient and uncertain; or in reſpect of our Diſpoſitions, which may be leſs capable of Impreſſion and more harden'd againſt the Methods of Conviction; or in reſpect of our Creator, who may no longer continue to us the offers of his Grace: From all this, it is obvious to conclude, that there can be no ſafety in purpoſing for the time to come; but only in the immediate execution of our purpoſes: that there can be no ſeaſon more convenient than the *preſent*, and poſſibly there may be *none beſides*.

Behold NOW *is the accepted time, behold* NOW *is the day of ſalvation.* And can they then have any due regard to that Salvation, who chooſe rather to hazard it at all theſe Adventures, than put forth their ſtrength immediately,

ately, and work it out? Can they juſtly prize or eſtimate the Bleſſing of eternal Happineſs, who place it behind temporary Good, and can ſuffer the Obligation of Friends, the Neceſſity of other Buſineſs, or the Gratification of their ſenſual Appetite, to hinder them from ſearching after it, and make them defer it to a farther opportunity? SERM. IV.

The Author of this Salvation has taught us otherwiſe, that unleſs we can forſake all our Friends, Relations and Poſſeſſions; that unleſs we can deny ourſelves and all our Appetites; yea, and give up our very Lives for the ſake of him and his Religion; *i. e.* unleſs we can forego them all when they ſtand in oppoſition to him, and tempt us to violate his Laws; we are not worthy to be his Diſciples. He has taught us again, not to be over ſolicitous in providing for the things of this Life, *what we ſhall eat or drink, or how we ſhall be cloathed*; not to let theſe things withdraw us from our Duty towards him; but to *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs*, and then, with a modeſt Uſe of the Opportunities he puts into our hands, to rely upon his Providence, with full aſſurance, that *all theſe things ſhall be added unto us*, in ſuch meaſure as is moſt proper and convenient for us.

Let the time paſt therefore *of our lives ſuffice us, to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.* Henceforth *let us walk* more *circumſpectly*,

SERM. IV. *ſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time*, which flies ſo ſwiftly by us, and *working while it is called to day*, as conſidering, that *the night cometh, when no man can work.* Let us ſeriouſly bewail the Errors of our paſt Lives, and no longer defer that moſt important Buſineſs, which has been *then* too long, *when* it has been *at all* defer'd. Let us provide more eſpecially againſt thoſe Temptations, which we have found moſt potent heretofore; and not imprudently engage in War, without conſidering our Strength, and providing againſt thoſe Aſſaults, which our Enemies may make. Above all, let us *look unto the hills, from whence cometh our help*; and remember that *our help ſtandeth in the name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.* Let us be earneſt in our Supplications at the Throne of Grace, that, however weak in ourſelves, we may yet be mightily ſtrengthen'd from above, and excited to *work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling*; from this Conſideration, becauſe *it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do. To him be all honour and glory, now, and henceforth for evermore.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON V.

The Character of THE SON OF MAN *explained.*

JOHN v. 27.

And hath given him authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the Son of man.

OUR bleſſed Saviour, who always *went about doing good*, having taken occaſion, on the *Sabbath day*, to reſtore to the free uſe of his Limbs, a certain poor impotent man, who had for many years laboured under his Infirmity; inſtead of convincing the *Jews* by this ſurprizing Miracle, that he was ſent from God, was maliciouſly traduced by them as a *Sabbath breaker*, and worthy therefore to be puniſhed with *death*. To this our Saviour replied, that his heavenly Father himſelf, whoſe reſting from the Works of the Creation was the great Example of the *Jewiſh Sabbath*, did not however reſt from all his Operations; but has ever ſince continued his Works of Preſervation and Providence, and diſpenſed his Favours throughout all times without diſtinction: So that in recovering this poor Cripple, our Lord did but concur with

SERM. V. with God's gracious Design of doing good to men. *My Father*, says he, *worketh hitherto, and I work.*

This Answer, it seems, instead of satisfying their Objection, did but furnish them a new one. By his breaking of the Sabbath, they thought he had incurred Death; but now much more when he had added *Blasphemy*. For such, they imagined, was that Equality with God, which he assumed to himself in calling God *his Father*, ἴδιον πατέρα (as it is in *the Original*,) *his own* Father; *his* Father, in a sense proper and peculiar to himself, so as he was *Father* of no one else: —not by Creation or Preservation; as he is the Father, not of Mankind only, but of all his Creatures:—not by Adoption, as he is the God and Father of his Elect:—but by an eternal and unconceivable Communication of the Divine Nature, whereby *Christ* is, (as one of our *Creeds* significantly calls him) "very God of very God."

As a Reply to this Exception, our Saviour took occasion, first to justify his Works, as perfectly consistent with the Will and Pleasure of the Father; and from thence proceeds to argue his Divine Power and Equality by Nature with him. He asserts, that *all men* ought to *honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; and urges it, as the necessary Consequence of that Power he had, of raising and quickening the Dead. He not only affirms that the Father

Father *gave him Life*, but that he had given him to have Life *in himſelf:* which could not be without partaking of the Divine Nature; ſince no other Principle, but the Divinity, can be the Fountain or Origin of Life. To this he adds, in the Text, the Prerogative of Judgment, which (together with the Power of raiſing the Dead) implies Omnipotence and Omniſcience, the incommunicable Attributes of the ſupreme Being, and by Conſequence proves him to be God. This Power of Judgment he had before mentioned at the twenty ſecond verſe. *The Father*, ſays he, *judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.* And this he repeats again in the Text; *He hath given him authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the Son of man.* SERM. V.

In diſcourſing upon which Words, theſe three things will be proper to be explained, (all well worthy of your ſerious Meditations, at this Seaſon of Advent more eſpecially) to wit,

I. The true Import and Meaning of That *Character*, by which ourbleſſed Saviour is ſo often diſtinguiſhed in the Goſpel; THE SON OF MAN.

II. The Nature and Deſign of That *Judgment*, he is here ſaid to have *Authority to execute.* And,

III. The

SERM. V. III. The Dependance which these two have on one another; or how That *Authority* is here said to have been given him for this reason, *because* he is the Son of man.

These Points are more copious, than that one Discourse should suffice to illustrate and explain them. And therefore I shall confine myself at present to the

I. FIRST of them, where I am to inquire into the true Import and Meaning of That *Character*, whereby our blessed Lord is so often distinguished in the Gospel; THE SON OF MAN.

Now hereby it has been generally thought, that our Saviour's *Humanity* is intimated to us, and we are taught that he was verily and truly Man *. And there can be no doubt, but that in the Scriptures of the *old Testament* the Names of *Man*, and *the Son of man*, are used promiscuously as terms synonymous. Thus when God is said not to be *a man, that he should lie*; *neither the son of man, that he should repent*; Interpreters have usually understood the Importance of those Phrases to be one and the same: and if there be any Difference between them, it is not to be sought for in this *Translation*; but in some other Variation of the Phrase in the *Original* †. And in the *Syriack* Language, which

* Vid. Jac. Gaillard de Fil. Hom. Quæst. 1. 2.

† אישׁ בן אדם.

was

was the very *Dialect* our Saviour uſed; this Uſe of the Phraſe prevailed ſo much, that even *Adam* himſelf, tho' he were created immediately by God, and not ſprung from any earthly Parent, is yet called expreſly in the *Syriack* Verſion of the *new Teſtament* ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܩܕܡܝܐ *bar noſhro kadmoio, the firſt ſon of man**. He was the *Father* of all men, but the *Son* of none. And therefore when he is called *the Son of man*, this muſt not be ſtrictly and grammatically taken, but ought to admit of an equitable Conſtruction from the *Idiom* of that People, who uſed to deſign *all men* indifferently by the ſame Character. SERM. V.

But however from hence it may appear, that ſuch was the juſt Import of the Phraſe; and that therefore, when 'tis uſed of our bleſſed Saviour, it muſt of courſe imply his being Man; yet I conceive it will be neceſſary to ſuppoſe it had ſome farther Meaning, as applied to him; when we obſerve with what peculiar Emphaſis 'tis uſed, and how plainly 'tis deſigned to diſtinguiſh him from all other Men beſides. For whereas the Prophets *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* are each of them, only in a familiar way, called *Son of Man*; our bleſſed Lord is called, in a more eminent and peculiar Manner, ὁ υἱὸς τῦ ἀνθρώπυ, *the* Son of Man; or *the* Son of *the* Man, as it might be pertinently rendered. Which way of ſpeak-

* 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47.

SERM. V. ing being never uſed of any one beſides himſelf, may incline us to ſuppoſe ſome farther Meaning than this, which would equally extend to all the Sons of *Adam*.

To account now for that farther Meaning, which peculiarly belongs to *Chriſt*; Interpreters are divided into two very different and indeed oppoſite Opinions: and whilſt ſome have taken this Appellation to ſet forth his Grandeur and Authority, and expreſs the glorious Majeſty and Dignity of his Perſon; as he is far ſuperior to all other men, and inveſted with the high Office of *Mediator between God and man*: (I ſay, whilſt this Interpretation is given us on one hand:) others, on the contrary, have choſen rather to refer it to *Chriſt*'s State of Humiliation and Abaſement; when *he took on him the form of a ſervant, was deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with griefs.*

It may be ſaid, in favour of the *firſt* of theſe Opinions, that the Prophet *Daniel*, in his Viſion, deſcribes the *Meſſiah* under this Character, and calls him *one like the Son of Man*; or (as ſome would have it rendered) *the very Son of Man*; at the ſame time that *there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages ſhould ſerve him: his dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away; and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed**. And it may be

* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

urged

urged likewiſe in favour of the *latter*, that this Appellation of *the Son of Man*, is by the *Pſalmiſt* uſed as a Term of Contempt or Diminution. *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or* the Son of man, *that thou viſiteſt him?* Which Paſſage, from the Application of it in the *new Teſtament*, appears to have been ſpoken of our Saviour *Chriſt*. SERM. V.

Add to this, that the *Hebrew* Word there uſed, and by which therefore it may ſeem reaſonable we ſhould explain the Phraſe in the *new Teſtament*, is not בן איש, but בן אדם, *i. e.* (according to the known Diſtinction of thoſe Words in the ſacred Language) *the Son* not of a *great* or illuſtrious, but a *mean* Man. From whence both *Daniel* and *Ezekiel* were ſo called, by the Angels that talked with them, to put them in mind of their own Baſeneſs and Infirmity.

But the truth is, neither the *one* nor the *other* of theſe Opinions can bear a ſtrict Examination. For in both theſe Views, in his State both of Sufferings and Glory, we may obſerve, he is alike repreſented under this very Character of *the Son of Man*. Was it *the Son of Man*, who had not *where to lay his head*, who was by *Judas betrayed into the hands of ſinners*, and after That, was *lifted up* upon the Croſs? (All which Inſtances refer to his State of Humiliation and Diſgrace!) It was the ſame *Son of Man*, who was *Lord alſo of the Sabbath*, who aſſerted his own

SERM. V. Power, both *to forgive ſins*, and *heal diſeaſes*; who is deſcribed as *ſitting on the right hand of God*, and *coming in the clouds of heaven*; nay, and who declared yet more expreſly in the Text, that he had *authority* given him *to execute judgment alſo*, for this very reaſon, BECAUSE *he is the Son of Man*. So that ſince he is mentioned under this Character; both in his State of Humiliation, and that of Exaltation; we ought not to confine it to *either* of them excluſivly of the *other:* but to give ſuch an Account of the Import and Deſign of it, as may ſerve to comprehend them *both*.

Now in both thoſe States, 'tis evident, he was the ſame *Meſſiah*, the ſame *Jeſus* and Saviour of mankind, that had been promiſed to our firſt Parents in Paradiſe; and after That, determined to the Seed of *Abraham*, and then of *David*. And indeed, did we but duly attend to thoſe Paſſages, in which he ſtands diſtinguiſhed by this Character, and calls himſelf *the Son of Man*; they might then naturally ſeem to ſuggeſt, that he was indeed that *promiſed Meſſiah*. For 'tis in the *firſt* place undeniably evident, from the Style of the *new Teſtament*, that the Names of *Chriſt*, or *Meſſiah*, and *the Son of Man*, are Terms equivalent. From whence our Lord uſes to ſpeak of himſelf under this latter Title, in ſuch Places, where the Occaſion of his uſing it, muſt put the Meaning out of queſtion. Did the *High Prieſt* demand of him, whether

ther he were *Chriſt the Son of God?* He readily made anſwer, *Hereafter ye ſhall ſee the* Son of Man *ſitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* Did *Andrew* again tell his brother, *We have found the Meſſiah which is called Chriſt?* Did *Philip* tell *Nathanael, We have found him of whom Moſes in the law and the prophets did write?* Laſtly, did *Nathanael* confeſs him to be *the Son of God*, and *King of Iſrael*; the known Titles and Characters of the *Meſſiah?* We find *Jeſus* declaring thereupon, in confirmation of all, *Hereafter ye ſhall ſee heaven opened, and the Angels of God aſcending and deſcending upon* THE SON OF MAN. SERM. V.

Again, if we compare the Types and Predictions of the Meſſiah in the *Old Teſtament*, with thoſe accounts we have of their completion in the *New*; we ſhall eaſily obſerve, that our bleſſed Saviour, when he makes application of ſuch Paſſages to himſelf, chooſes to term himſelf *the Son of Man*; and thereby clearly intimates, that this appellation did properly belong to him, as he was the promiſed *Meſſiah*, or *Chriſt of God.*

Once more, *laſtly*, the ſame meaning of the Phraſe ſufficiently appears from the Confeſſion of the *Jews* themſelves, who ſtartled at *Chriſt*'s Prediction of his Death upon the Croſs, immediately replied, *We have heard out of the law, that Chriſt abideth for ever; and how ſayeſt thou the Son of man muſt be lift up?*

SERM. V. *up? Who is this Son of man* *? They were, it seems, rightly appriz'd, that *the Son of Man* was properly the Character of *Christ*. But they were prepossess'd likewise, with that prevailing prejudice of their Nation, that he should *never dye*. And from hence arose the difficulty they objected to our Saviour's Discourse; *How say'st thou, the Son of man must be lift up?* Nor do even the *modern Jews* disclaim the Exposition of their *Ancestors*; but by the Son of Man, described in that passage of *Daniel* abovementioned, teach us to understand their King *Messiah* †.

From all this it seems to follow, that the *Messiah*, and the *Son of Man* are terms equivalent: and not without good reason; since the latter of these does very plainly extend to both the parts of the Messiah's Character; and includes at once his state of *Humiliation*, and his state of *Exaltation*, or Triumph consequent upon it. For when we find him, by way of eminence, thus called *The Son of Man*; this Character naturally leads us back to that *first Promise* made of the *Messiah*, in which he is called *the Seed of the Woman*; and is foretold at once, as having his own *heel* bruised by the Serpent, and then in return bruising his *head* for it. Here now, we have the *Messiah* predicted in his twofold State; both *as a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs*, and exposed to all that pain and agony whereby the

* John xii. 34. † Vid. Jachiad in Daniel.

Serpent

Serpent was to *bruiſe his heel*; and likewiſe as a glorious and mighty Conqueror, and obtaining that Victory over Sin, and Death, and Hell, whereby it is here promiſed he ſhould *bruiſe the ſerpent's head.* Both theſe, you may obſerve, are predicted of the Seed of the Woman, between whom and the Serpent, and his Seed, there commenc'd a wide and mortal Enmity. And who then is this Seed of the Woman, but the moſt illuſtrious Offspring of our firſt Parents, and ſo, in a moſt eminent and peculiar ſenſe, THE SON OF MAN? Which is the Character our Saviour chooſes to deſcribe himſelf by, in thoſe very paſſages, where he ſpeaks of the enmity there is between him, and the Devil and his Children; the Sufferings he ſhould endure from the Devil, and his Agents inſtigated by him; and the Victory he ſhould at laſt gain over them all, by his Death and Reſurrection. SERM. V.

The Son of Man then, was That *Seed of the Woman*, which had ſo graciouſly been promiſed our firſt Parents in Paradiſe. And it is beyond all doubt, with regard to this Prediction, that as *Adam* was confeſſedly the *firſt* of men; ſo our bleſſed Saviour is term'd the *ſecond* and the laſt *Adam.* He is called after the name of *Adam*; becauſe the *firſt Adam* was but the Type or Figure of him that was to come; inaſmuch as *Chriſt* is no leſs the Source and Fountain of our ſpiritual Life, than the *other* of our natural; and we

SERM. V. do not more certainly derive our Sin and Misery from *Adam*, than they who are renew'd and ſanctified receive their Remedy from *Chriſt*. And he is called the *ſecond* or the laſt *Adam*; becauſe there can be but theſe two Principles: and all mankind being of one ſort or other, either Aliens or Regenerate, are reckon'd to be contain'd under theſe Two, as their proper Repreſentatives. He is called, by way of eminence, *The Seed of the Woman* in the ſingular; becauſe he only, of all the ſons of *Adam*, was able to reſtore what he had forfeited; and by engaging in a ſevere conflict with the Serpent, to diſarm him of his Force, and lay him at his Feet. From whence it comes to paſs, that all the reſt of mankind being neglected, we there find mention of Two Men only, the *firſt Adam* and the *laſt*. And I conceive it muſt be with regard to this Diſtinction, that we are to underſtand thoſe phraſes in Scripture of the *old Man* and the *new*: the *former* denoting thoſe corrupt Diſpoſitions and Affections, which ariſe from the original Depravity inherent in our Nature, and derived to us from the Sin of *Adam*; the *latter* denoting that ſtate of Grace and Renovation, which is the privilege propoſed to us in the Chriſtian Church.

All theſe are but ſo many corroborating Proofs, that when our bleſſed Lord is called *the Son of Man*, he is thereby intimated to have been That Seed of the Woman, which

was

was promiſed to repair the Damage of our SERM. firſt Parents; and by ſuffering a little from the V. Malice of the Serpent, to gain the ſurer Victory and Conqueſt over him. And it was not without the higheſt Wiſdom, that he ſo often choſe to diſtinguiſh himſelf by This, before any other Character of the *Meſſiah*; as being more particularly adapted, than the reſt, to obviate and confute thoſe errors and inveterate Prejudices, with which the *Jews* were poſſeſs'd; and to inſtruct them with juſter notions, both of his Perſon, and the Nature of his Office.

For did they, in the *firſt* place, doubt and heſitate about his Original, and the manner of his coming? Did they imagine he might drop to them from the Clouds, or ſpring out of the Earth? Did they make it an objection againſt our Saviour's being He, that they knew his Parentage and his Relations; whereas when *Chriſt* came no man ſhould know whence he was? When they heard him called *the Son of Man*, this ſhould carry back their thoughts to the firſt notice that was given of him; how he was there promiſed as *the Seed of the Woman*, partaker of fleſh and blood like other men, and like them too deſcended from the ſame common *Mother of all living*.

Did they *again* imagine, from the different Deſcriptions of the *Meſſiah*, in the *Old Teſtament*; ſometimes as a deſpicable and afflicted Man,

SERM. V. Man, at other times as a mighty and victorious Prince: Did they, I say, from hence conclude, there should be two distinct Messiahs to answer these two different Characters, the Son of *Joseph*, and the Son of *David?* Behold, this Title of *the Son of Man* might lead them back to that original Prediction; where they would perceive both Characters to center in the same Person; who having his own *heel* first bruised by the Serpent, in his lowly and afflicted State; after that, in return, should bruise the Serpent's *head*, and come off *more than Conqueror*.

Did they *again* expect a temporal Deliverer, flourishing with outward Force and secular Authority? Did they look for a *Messiah*, who should break the *Roman* Yoak, and make them superiour to all Nations of the Earth? Behold the same Prediction refer'd to by this Title of *the Son of Man*, might better instruct them in the nature of his Office. He was to be a King and a Conqueror, it is true. But then his *Kingdom* was *not* to be *of this world*. The enemies he had to vanquish were the Serpent and his Seed; *that old Serpent the Devil*, together with the other Powers of Darkness; and those wicked men, who in a spiritual Sense are *Children of the Devil*, and do the works of their Father. From this condition of his Enemies, they might justly argue for the nature of his Government; that spiritual Enemies must be conquer'd by a spiritual

ritual Force; and that the Kingdom to be e- SERM.
ſtabliſh'd in the room of their uſurp'd Em- V.
pire, muſt be ſpiritual too. This might cor-
rect their expectations of earthly Grandeur and external Pomp, and prepare them to receive their Saviour, however he appeared; even tho' *he had not where to lay his head.*

Once more, *laſtly*, did the *Jews* fondly imagine, that they ſhould always continue the only Favourites of Heaven? Did they expect to ſee all other Nations excluded the Meſſiah's Kingdom, whilſt they alone ſhould be admitted to the enjoyment of his Bounty and Protection? It was becauſe they had forgot, or did not duly reflect, that he who was the Son of *Abraham* and *David*, was likewiſe *the Son of Man*, the promiſed Seed of that Woman, who was *the Mother of all living*; and promiſed for this very purpoſe, that he might *bruiſe the Serpent's head*, and repair that harm and injury, which through the Serpent's ſubtilty was done to Man. From whence it was eaſy and obvious to conclude, there ſhould be no difference between the *Jew* and the *Greek*; but all Nations ſhould be welcome to partake of that Benefit, which was promiſed to our firſt Parents, as the Repreſentatives of *All.* Accordingly, when the *Meſſiah* is mention'd, by the Prophet *Daniel*, under this Character of *the Son of Man*, we find his Kingdom is deſcribed as extending univerſally; and we are taught, that *all people, nations and languages*

SERM. V. *languages ſhould ſerve him.* A moſt convincing Argument, that his Name ſhould not be great in *Iſrael* alone, nor his Church ſhut up within the bounds of *Paleſtine.*

And now let me have leave to pauſe a little, to contemplate and admire the Excellency of this glorious Name, which we have too often, all of us, I fear, read or heard mention'd in the Scripture, without any great concern or impreſſion on our Minds. But bleſſed God! With what immenſe Wiſdom was this Name choſen, before all the other Characters of *the Meſſiah*, as beſt fitted to obviate and deſtroy all Prejudice and Error, and ſilence the Cavils of unreaſonable and gainſaying Men?

The Son of *Abraham* or *David*, had he been called, nay, or *the Son of God*; neither of theſe had tended ſo directly, to remove thoſe Prejudices of the *Jews:* perhaps they had ſerved rather to ſtrengthen them in ſome; conſidering how perverſely thoſe Characters of the *Meſſiah* had been commonly explain'd. For they took them to denote the Dignity and Grandeur of his Perſon; and in ſome ſort to reſtrain the Diſpenſation of his Favours to themſelves. *Abraham* was the great Patriarch of their Nation, and it was upon account of their deſcent from him, that they flatter'd themſelves with outward Privileges and Diſtinctions; to be one Day not only reſtored to them, but enlarg'd by his promiſed Seed, the victorious

victorious *Meſſiah.* *David*, in like manner, was their moſt pious King and Governour, whoſe Seed, it had been promiſed, ſhould *ſit upon his throne for ever*; from whence they, through their ſpiritual blindneſs, vainly expected, in a carnal Senſe, that there ſhould ere long *grow up a ſtem out of the root of Jeſſe*; which ſhould reign and proſper upon Earth; which ſhould aſſert the privileges of his own people, and extend his Empire over all his Enemies. So that had our Saviour uſed to call himſelf the Son of *Abraham*, or *David*, he had but ſtruck in with the prevaling prejudices of the times; and flatter'd the groundleſs hopes the people entertain'd of a temporal Deliverance. Nor had they been leſs encouraged by that other Title of *the Son of God.* For That likewiſe was abuſed by their fond Expectations, to denote him a Prince of ſecular Authority and outward Force, for the ſpecial Advantage of that Nation, which God had owned for his *peculiar People:* As may appear from *Nathanael*'s Confeſſion of our Saviour; *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Iſrael.* SERM. V.

But when in this humble Style he only called himſelf *the Son of Man*, and thereby refer'd them to the original Prediction of his Perſon and Character; he then furniſh'd out a ſovereign Remedy againſt thoſe fatal and pernicious Errors, which had ſo deeply taken root; and taught them at once the neceſſity of

SERM. V. of his appearing in a lowly and afflicted State, and likewiſe the extent of thoſe Benefits, which he was ready to beſtow indifferently and promiſcuouſly to all the Nations of the Earth.

I will conclude this Diſcourſe, when I have conſider'd one Objection againſt this Expoſition of the Title or Character of *the Son of Man*; and That is, how it came to paſs, that he ſo ſtrictly forbad his Diſciples to preach or declare him to be *the Chriſt*; if he had himſelf ſo often, by his frequent uſe of this Character, teſtified the ſame thing? But however at firſt ſight this may appear an Inconſiſtency, and be charged with a deſign to publiſh and conceal the ſelf ſame Doctrine; yet upon a nearer enquiry it will not be difficult, to find out a way to reconcile the difference, without giving up that Expoſition of the Phraſe, which has been ſo abundantly confirm'd. For his Deſign in forbidding his Diſciples to preach this Doctrine, manifeſtly was not to keep the ſerious *Jews* in a profound Ignorance: (the whole courſe of his Doctrine and Miracles tended naturally to inform them; and they are therefore upbraided with Infidelity, for ſtanding out againſt ſuch convincing Evidence:) but to comply with ſome exigence or concurrence of affairs, which might make it, at that time, improper for his Diſciples to be the Publiſhers and Preachers of it.

Nor are we at a loſs to account for the Im- SERM. pediment. For beſides that, it became our V. Lord to be the firſt Preacher of the Goſpel, and publiſh the firſt notices of that Salvation, which he came to work; it is certain, that the Diſciples being not as yet *endued with* that *power from on high*, (which after our Lord's Aſcenſion was ſo plentifully ſhed forth upon them,) labour'd themſelves under the ſame Prejudices with the other *Jews*, with regard to the nature and deſign of the *Meſſiah*'s Kingdom. Even the Divine Converſation of their Maſter, was not, it ſeems, ſufficient to root them out: but whatever he might ſay of the Difficulties and Hardſhips they muſt expect to ſuffer, they were all ſo charm'd with golden Dreams of Crowns and Scepters, that when two of them had plotted for the principal Preferments in his Kingdom; they preſently provoked the Jealouſy and Envy of the reſt.

From hence were they ſo backward to believe our Saviour's Predictions of his Death and Sufferings, as tending to fruſtrate their Hopes and Expectations, and inconſiſtent with the notions they had always entertain'd of the Meſſiah: inſomuch, that when the Truth of thoſe Predictions was confirm'd by the Event; they were immediately dejected and caſt down, they began to deſpond and ſuſpect they had been miſtaken, whilſt they *truſted it had been he which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael.*

SERM. V. *rael.* When after this again, they were flush'd with new Hopes upon his Resurrection; they presently return'd to their old notions of an earthly Government, and flatly put the question to him; *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* It was some time after this, before they fully understood the true extent of Gospel Privileges; or knew how to look upon the *Gentile* world, as other than *common or unclean.* So that it was necessary, they should be first themselves *instructed, in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God*; before they took upon them, to teach and to instruct others. Otherwise instead of propagating Truth, they had promoted Error; they had but confirm'd the common prejudices for the present; they had at once convinced themselves of Falshood, and hinder'd the Efficacy of our Saviour's Doctrine; when what they had thus preached, should come at last to be contradicted in the Event.

These were sufficient Reasons, why they should be forbid, at the present, to declare their Master's Character; and tho' they were sent, on some occasions, to preach the Gospel; yet they were reasonably put under some Restrictions; and required to wait for farther Knowledge and Illumination, by the plentiful Effusion of the *Holy Ghost.* But they were no just Objections against our Saviour's bearing witness of himself, who was free from all Prejudice and Error or; to his laying a Foun-

dation for the future eſtabliſhment of his true Character, by appealing to the moſt ancient Prophecy concerning him, and ſtiling himſelf *the Son of Man.* SERM. V.

I ſhould next proceed to the SECOND Head propoſed, *viz.* the nature and deſign of That *Judgment*, he is here ſaid to have *Authority to execute.* But this muſt be reſerv'd to another Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c.

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CHRIST *the appointed* JUDGE, becauſe *he is* THE SON OF MAN.

JOHN v. 27.

And hath given him authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the Son of man.

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— I Proceed next in order, to the SECOND Head propoſed, namely, to conſider the Nature and Deſign of That *Judgment*, he is here ſaid to have *Authority to execute*. And for the better illuſtration of this matter, it will be proper to enquire,

1. Into the Certainty of the Fact, that *Chriſt* is actually inveſted with this Power of *Judgment*.

2. In what Reſpects, more particularly, it does conſiſt, or is executed by him. And then,

3. In what Senſe he is here ſaid, to have *Authority* to that Purpoſe, *given* or derived to him from the *Father*.

1. *Firſt* then, I would enquire into the Certainty of the Fact, and ſhew, that *Chriſt* is actually inveſted with this Power of *Judgment*. And now the common Diſtinction of

our Saviour's Offices into *Regal*, *Prophetical*, and *Sacerdotal*, (the *firſt* to govern, the *ſecond* to inſtruct, and the *laſt* to expiate the Offences of his Church,) may ſave us, in this Place, the Pains of ſearching thro' the whole Oeconomy of our Redemption, to find out this *Authority*, of executing Judgment. For That, there can be no doubt, is one Branch of the *Regal* Authority, or Power, it being the Sovereign's undoubted Right, to put the Laws in Execution. This is what, I think, all Schemes of Government agree in; nor is it poſſible, indeed, for any Government to ſubſiſt without it. So that, if we can but make out *Chriſt*'s Title to the *Regal Authority*, we ſhall, by the ſame Labour, make good his Title to this Power of *Judgment*. SERM. VI.

And this the Scripture aſſerts in ſuch expreſs Terms, as to aſcribe univerſal Empire and Sovereignty to him. It was the *Pſalmiſt*'s Prediction, that he ſhould have *all things put in ſubjection under his feet*; and that even *his enemies ſhould be made his footſtool*. Accordingly we are aſſured, in the *new Teſtament*, that *God has highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth**. *Angels, authorities and powers being made ſubject unto him*†. The very Devils themſelves, however they

* Phil. ii. 9. 10. † 1 Pet. iii. 22.

SERM. VI. refuſe Obedience, are neceſſitated to ſubmit, *he having ſpoiled* thoſe *Principalities and Powers, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over Them* *. Over Men, the greateſt of the Sons of Men, his Dominion is ſo abſolute, that he is from thence called KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS †.

From hence are the Kings of the Earth exhorted to *kiſs the Son*, in token of Subjection. His faithful Subjects and Servants he protects and rewards; but as for his Enemies, and *thoſe, who would not that he ſhould reign over them, —he rules them with a rod of iron, and breaks them in pieces like a Potter's veſſel.* Thus is he not only (as the Apoſtle ſtyles him) *the firſt born of every creature*; but more eſpecially (as the ſame Apoſtle goes on) *the head of the body, the Church* ‡: in which his Empire and Government is more remarkably conſpicuous. To *That*, he preſcribes Laws; in *That*, he ordains, ſubſtitutes, and diſpenſes forth the Means of that Salvation, he has wrought for us. So that, altho' the Church be not now confined to any ſingle Nation, as heretofore it was to that of *Iſrael*; yet the ſpiritual Privileges we receive by *Chriſt*, are as much confined as ever to thoſe, who are admitted into that myſtical Society, and thereby become more immediately ſubject to his ſpecial Government, and are taken into his Protection.

* Col. ii. 15. † Rev. xix. 16. ‡ Col. i. 15. 18.

This,

This, in ſhort, is the Account the Scriptures give us, of the preſent Condition of our Saviour's Kingdom. And from his very Birth was he inveſted with this *Regal* Character. For ſo the Eaſtern *Magi* acknowledged him, to be *born, King of the Jews*; the Angel, which appeared to the Shepherds at his Birth, expreſly affirmed him to be *Chriſt the Lord*; And a greater than the Angel yet, declared, that *to this end he was born, and for this cauſe he came into the world*; that he ſhould be a King: and in the Text, aſſerts his Divine Right to that high Dignity; for that the Father had already *given him authority to execute judgment.* SERM. VI.

But yet, however he were thus by Right and Deſignation *King*; we ſee, he choſe rather to forbear the Exerciſe of his Power: the greateſt Part of his Life he paſſed in a private and obſcure Manner; and tho' after he had entred on his Miniſtry, the Miracles he wrought diſplayed his Power, and ſhewed that Nature it ſelf was obedient to his Word; yet theſe belonged rather to his *Prophetical*, than to his *Regal* Office; as being wrought in Confirmation of his Doctrine, and deſigned to engage the Affections and Obedience of the People. The humble Appearance, which he made, was as a Sort of Cloud or Veil, thrown over the Brightneſs of his Majeſty: and however ſome Rays of it might ſhine forth in his Miracles; yet the full

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Manifeſtations of his Royalty were reſerved, as more proper for his State of Exaltation.

From hence it comes to paſs, that his Inveſtiture with this Character, is ſometimes ſpoken of, as tho' 'twere ſubſequent to his Reſurrection: becauſe, whatever were his *Right* before; the *Exerciſe* of his Power did commence afterwards. 'Twas *then*, he declared to his Diſciples, that *all power was given unto him, in heaven and in earth* *; *then*, that St. *Peter* profeſſed before the *Jewiſh Sanhedrin*, that *God had exalted with his right hand*, that *Jeſus*, whom they had crucified, *to be a Prince and a Saviour* †. 'Twas *then*, that our Saviour commiſſioned the Diſciples, as his proper Subſtitutes, to govern, as well as to inſtruct his Church; and ſent forth his Holy Spirit to inſpire them with thoſe Gifts and Graces, which might qualify them for it.

And his Inſtructions too, let it be added, have the Force of Laws; and are enforced therefore with the proper Sanctions of Rewards and Puniſhments. In which two Parts conſiſts the whole ſovereign Authority; the *legiſlative* Power, in the Preſcription of Laws; and the *executive*, in the Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments. The laſt of theſe I take to be ſufficiently implied, in that Power of *Judgment*, which, in the Text, our Lord has aſſerted to himſelf, and which will be

* Matth. xxviii. 18. † Acts v. 30, 31.

yet

yet better underſtood, by our proceeding to the

2. *Second* Thing propoſed under this Head, *viz.* to ſhew in what reſpects more particularly, this *Judgment* does conſiſt, or is executed by him.

Now whatever Notice he takes of the Obſervation or Violation of his Laws; whether it be by chaſtiſing his Servants for the Failures of their Lives; by granting Abſolution and Pardon to the Penitent; by ſending his Spirit to comfort them, upon the Diſcharge of their Duty; or by adding ſuch temporal Comforts and Conveniencies, as may be proper for their farther Encouragement: or whether, on the other hand, it be, by puniſhing the Wicked and Diſobedient; either by the ſpiritual Cenſures of his Subſtitutes on Earth; or more immediately by bodily Diſeaſes; by croſſing their Deſigns, and preventing that Miſchief, they intended to his Church; or by delivering them over to a reprobate Mind, and leaving them to the Darkneſs and Obſtinacy of their own Hearts; withdrawing from them that gracious Influence, which alone can enlighten and direct them: All theſe are the proper Acts of *that Judgment*, which he here ſays, he has *Authority to execute*. For there can be no doubt, but 'tis the Judge's Buſineſs to put the Sanctions of the Law in Execution, to puniſh *the Unruly*, and protect *the Good*. Accordingly we find in

SERM. VI. the *Revelation*, that as well the Chaſtiſements and Deliverance of the Faithful, as the Puniſhment of Infidels and Rebels, is aſcribed to *Chriſt*, who is ſaid to hold *in his right hand the ſeven Stars*, *i. e.* the ſeven Biſhops, or chief Governors of the *Aſian* Churches; and to walk *in the midſt of the ſeven golden Candleſticks*, or of thoſe Churches themſelves *.

But the moſt ſignal Inſtance of this Authority, is That future and final Judgment, which the Scriptures teach us, that our Lord ſhall execute in Perſon, when he ſhall deſcend from Heaven on a Cloud, in viſible and dreadful Majeſty; and all Mankind ſhall be ſummoned to appear before his Judgment-Seat, that the Juſtice of his Government may be conſpicuous and made known to all, and *every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad:* when he ſhall pronounce Sentence upon all Men, *according to their works*; admitting his faithful Servants, the ſound Members of his myſtical Body, to a Participation of his own Glory; and condemning the Wicked (ſuitably to their Demerit) to abide an Eternity of Shame and Miſery.

I ſhall conclude this Head, when I have added in the

* Rev. ii. 1.

3. *Third*

3. *Third* Place, a brief Account of the Derivation of this Power of *Judgment* to our Saviour *Chriſt*. He tells us; it was *the Father* had *given him* this *Authority*. And ſo indeed the Scripture ſpeaks of his Exaltation to the *Regal* Office; that *God has exalted him with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour*; and that God has *anointed him with the oil of gladneſs*, and ſet his *King upon his holy Hill of Sion*. To the ſame Purpoſe is That in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, that *the Son of man was brought before the Ancient of days, and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages ſhould ſerve him: his dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom, that which ſhall not be deſtroyed**. And yet more particularly, with regard to his future Coming to Judgment, we learn from St. *Paul*; that *God has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained* †; and from St. *Peter* likewiſe, to the ſame Purpoſe, that *this is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead* ‡. SERM. VI.

'Twere uſeleſs, as well as tedious, to enumerate the Proofs of this particular, which they who read their *Bibles* cannot help obſerving, of themſelves. The Difficulty is, to reconcile this matter with the important Doctrine of our Saviour's Divinity, and ſhew

* Dan. vii. 13, 14. † Acts xvii. 31. ‡ Chap. x. 42.

how

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But this Difficulty will admit of various Anſwers. For *firſt*, it may be allowed, that the Divine Nature and Powers eſſential to it, are communicated and derived from the *Father*, without ſuppoſing the *Son* to be dependent and precarious; ſo long as this Communication itſelf is maintained to be not *arbitrary*, but *neceſſary*, as Light from the Sun; nor yet to have had a Beginning, before which he had no ſuch Powers; but to have had a neceſſary Exiſtence from all Eternity.

Again, in the next Place, this may be underſtood with relation to the Method, in which God is pleaſed to manifeſt his Nature to us, and aſſert the Dignity and Honour of each Perſon ſubſiſting in it. For this reaſon is every Perſon manifeſted under ſome ſpecial Title or Character: And to uſe the Words of a judicious Author, "the Father (whoſe "Honour had been ſufficiently ſecured, un- "der the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, and could "not but be ſo under the *Chriſtian* alſo) "being as much concerned for the *Honour* "of his *Son*, had been pleaſed to commit *all* "*Judgment* to him, [or leave the Exerciſe of it to run in his name particularly] "for "this very End and Purpoſe, that Men "might thereby ſee and know, that the "Son, as well as the Father, was *Judge of all*

" *all the earth*; and might from thence be convinced, how reaſonable it was, and how highly it concerned them, to pay all the ſame Honour to the Son, which they had hitherto believed to belong to the Father only *.

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Or *laſtly*, if this Communication of Power be explained, in a lower and precarious Senſe; yet ſtill the Difficulty may be ſolved, as far as our preſent Argument is concerned in it; when we remember, that he who is thus by Nature God, did likewiſe condeſcend to become Man; and by a myſterious Union of the Divine and Human Nature in the ſame Perſon, to take upon himſelf the Office and Character of the *Meſſiah:* that he who was, as touching his *Godhead*, uncreated and equal to the Father; was yet, as touching his *Manhood*, a created Being, and inferior to him: For tho' the *Divine* Nature could receive no Acceſſions of Power, yet the *Human* might: nor was it poſſible indeed that he, conſidered as *the Chriſt of God*, ſhould have *a Name, which is above every name*; or be placed far above all other Creatures, and inveſted with the Right and Authority of *Judgment*, without having ſome new Privileges beſtowed on his *Humanity*, to which it had no Claim or Title in its own Nature. However, therefore, as God, he was both Supreme and Omnipotent, and ſo incapable of any derivative Ex-

* Dr. Waterland's Defenſe of Queries p. 279.

cellen-

SERM. VI. cellencies or Powers, imparted in time, and by an arbitrary Cauſe; yet as he was *the Son of Man*, the *human* Nature was aſſumed to the *Divine*, and he *might*, nay *muſt*, in That, derive his Powers, from a prior and ſuperior Original.

Not that the human Nature is capable of receiving the infinite Perfections of the Deity. That which is *created* muſt needs be *finite*. But when the Divine and human Nature were, in an unconceivable manner, united in the ſame Perſon; then he, who had thoſe Attributes, was Man as well as God; and the *human* was admitted to a ſuitable participation of thoſe Honours, which cannot poſſibly be ſeparated from the *Divine*. Nay, and for this very reaſon it was, our Saviour aſſures us, he had this *Authority* given him, *to execute judgment*, BECAUSE *he is the Son of Man*. Which leads me in order to the

III. THIRD and laſt General Head propoſed, namely, to explain the Dependance, which theſe two have on one another; or how That authority is here ſaid to have been given him for this reaſon, BECAUSE *he is the Son of Man*.

And here, if we conſider this Character of *the Son of Man*, as it implies his being *very Man*, or really partaker of the human Nature; it does, in this reſpect, ſuggeſt to us a very proper qualification of him, for his receiving this *authority to execute judgment*. For he may

may, under this veil of Fleſh, diſplay himſelf in viſible Majeſty, and appear with all that ſolemn Pomp and Ceremony, which is ſo apt to ſtrike our outward Senſes, and engage our Reverence and Attention. Or if thundrings and lightnings, without a viſible appearance, might be thought ſufficient to awe and terrify; yet the addition of This, at leaſt, is proper to engage the truſt and confidence of them, who have been careful to approve their Conſciences before him. And this ſure it cannot fail to do, when they reflect, that he is himſelf no ſtranger to the Frailties and Weakneſſes of human Nature; and therefore will be ſure to make all gracious allowances for the involuntary ſlips of this imperfect State, as he is at preſent ready to ſend forth his holy Spirit to aſſiſt and comfort us, to keep us from falling, or reſtore us afterwards. For what the Author to the *Hebrews* has obſerv'd of him, in his *Prieſtly* Character, may, with the ſame reaſon, be applied to him in his *Regal*. *We have not ſuch a* KING, *or* JUDGE, *as cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without ſin* *. And *in that he himſelf hath ſuffer'd being tempted, he is able* and diſpoſed *to ſuccour them that are tempted* †.

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By all this it may appear, how fit it is, that *Jeſus* ſhould be made our *Judge* upon this very account, BECAUSE *he is the Son of Man:*

* Heb. iv. 15. † Chap. ii. 18.

SERM. VI. because he is partaker of the same nature with our selves; capable of discovering himself to our corporeal Senses, and conscious, by experience in his own Person, of those Frailties and Infirmities we labour under. And yet, this is but the least and lowest Sense or Importance of the Phrase. If we would discern the true Force and Emphasis of this Passage, of the reason here given for our blessed Saviour's investiture with this power of Judgment; we must stop to recapitulate a little, and recollect what farther is intended, or meant of him, under this Character. And That, in short, has been shewn clearly to amount to This; that he was the promised *Messiah*, That *Seed of the Woman*, which, by submitting to have his own heel bruised by the Serpent, was in the end to bruise the Serpent's head. From hence the Inference is easy, why he should therefore be invested with this *Authority to execute Judgment*. For who fitter to reign, than He that had the right of conquest? Who worthier of the highest Honours, the Father could bestow upon him, than He that vanquish'd his most deadly Enemies; and by humbling himself *even to the Death of the Cross*, had *spoiled Principalities and Powers*, and had *triumph'd over them?* From his Humiliation and Obedience, St. *Paul* accounts for the reason of his Exaltation: *Wherefore*, says he, *God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which*

which is above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow *. And again, *we ſee Jeſus, who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the ſuffering of death, crowned with glory and honour* †. SERM. VI.

But this argument will be yet much ſtronger, when it is conſider'd, that this his conqueſt over the Devil, was obtain'd by virtue of his Union with the Divinity. No Creature, as ſuch, was equal to this mighty Enterpriſe; to ſubdue the Powers of Darkneſs, and reſcue the miſerable Captives detain'd by them. This muſt be the work of an Almighty arm; and therefore the ſame Perſon, who could do this, might likewiſe have *Authority to execute Judgment*. For though no meer Creature is qualified for ſuch an Office, which requires Omniſcience to underſtand the Cauſe, and an Almighty Power to execute the Sentence; yet he was well qualified in both theſe reſpects, in whom *dwelt all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*; and who, as he became in time *the Son of Man*, had been from all Eternity *the Son of God*.

Once more, this Conqueſt of the Devil, and overthrow of his Kingdom, expreſſed under the Figure of *bruiſing the Serpent's head*, does not only imply ſuch Powers in our Saviour, as muſt qualify him for this exerciſe of Judgment; but it more immediately implies, his actual inveſtiture with the *Regal* authority, and particularly with the power of *Judg-*

* Phil. ii. 9, 10. † Heb. ii. 9.

ment.

SERM. VI.

ment. For was he to *bruiſe the Serpent's head*, as well by redeeming ſuch, as would ſubmit to him from that miſerable Bondage, in which they were detain'd; as by ſubjecting them that ſhould refuſe their own Mercy, together with the Devil, who ſeduced them, to the greater Condemnation? This muſt ſuppoſe him inveſted with a Power to Pardon or Condemn; to protect ſuch, as ſhould dutifully ſubmit to his Authority; and to execute Vengeance on his Enemies. So that, ſince all this was the proper Office of *the Son of Man*, or That promiſed Seed of the Woman, who was to engage with the Serpent and his Seed; and by diſarming him of all his Force, to reſcue Mankind from his Vaſſalage, and repair the Damage we had otherwiſe ſuſtain'd by the Fall of our firſt Anceſtors: we ſee from hence, the neceſſity of his receiving the executive Power, to diſpenſe Rewards and Puniſhments; we ſee, why the right of Judgment ſhould be made the ſpecial Character of the *Son*, rather than of the *Father*, or the *Holy Ghoſt*; and how ſtrongly that reaſon concludes, which our bleſſed Saviour urges, that he has *Authority* given him *to execute Judgment*, for this very reaſon; BECAUSE *he is the Son of Man*; becauſe he had aſſumed the human Nature, as that promiſed Seed of our firſt Parents, who came to redeem us, both from Sin and Puniſhment.

And

And now let theſe Conſiderations, both of our Judge's Office and Perfections, make us careful to approve ourſelves before him; and to look up with confidence, when we have done our Duty with ſincerity. For, is he the Judge, that muſt acquit or condemn us at the laſt day? It is certainly our Intereſt to behave ourſelves, in ſuch a manner as may gain his Approbation; ſince upon *that*, depends our Happineſs or Miſery to all Eternity. Is he again omniſcient and infallible? Let us be very careful, how we prepare ourſelves to paſs the Scrutiny; ſince there can be no hope of concealing from him our moſt ſecret Sins; but *all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do.* Laſtly, Is he merciful and faithful? And has he felt the Infirmities of human Fleſh? Let this inſpire us with humble Confidence, that he will not rigidly exact beyond our Abilities; but knows how to allow for thoſe Weakneſſes and Frailties, which are inſeparable from our Nature: and where the Heart is willing and ſincere, will graciouſly accept of our Endeavours; tho' the Obedience perform'd be but too viſibly imperfect. SERM. VI.

To Him, with the Father, &c.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST's BIRTH *good Tidings of great Joy to all People.*

LUKE ii. 10, 11.

And the Angel said unto them, fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

SERM. VII.

THAT which the *Prophets* with unanimous consent foretold, and the holy *Patriarchs* expected; who tho' they had not themselves *received the promises*, yet *having seen them afar off* by Faith, (which is *the evidence of things not seen*) *were persuaded of them and embraced them* *: Even That, which from the Beginning, God had determined to do, *when the fulness of time was come*, he was pleased to perform. So that *the promise, which God made unto the fathers, he hath fulfilled unto us their children* †, that he would send his Son; the Anniversary of whose Nativity we *this day* celebrate.

* Heb. xi. 13. † Acts xiii, 32. 33.

A DAY,

A DAY, which at once requires of us the deepeſt *Humiliation*, and the moſt exalted *Praiſe!* That ſuch ſhould be the Sins of Mankind, as nothing but the Blood of the Son of God could expiate, calls for our moſt hearty Sorrow, and Contrition, and Repentance. But that in this Extremity *God* ſhould *ſo love the world, as to ſend forth his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life*; is enough to *turn our heavineſs into joy*, and our Mourning into Songs of Thanſgiving: So that we may well be ſtruck with Admiration and Joy, at the ſound of theſe Words of the *Angel* to the *Shepherds*, when he ſaid unto them, *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.* In diſcourſing upon which Words, I ſhall take occaſion SERM. VII.

I. To explain the Meſſage, on which the Angel was ſent, as it is expreſſed in the latter Verſe of the Text—*unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.*

II. To inſiſt upon the great Advantage and Importance of this Meſſage, as it is intimated in the Preface with which 'tis introduced:—*And the Angel ſaid unto them, fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people.* And then,

SERM. VII. III. and lastly, to make some practical Reflections, and conclude.

I. FIRST then, I am to explain the Message, on which the Angel was sent, as it is expressed in the latter Verse of the Text—*unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* In which Words there are *four* things, which deserve to be considered, *viz.*

1. The Character of the Person, whom this Message concerns, *a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

2. The Manner of his Coming; he is here said to be *born.*

3. The *Time* and 4. The *Place* } of his Nativity. And,

1. *First*, the Character of the Person, whom this Message concerns, *a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

When our first Parents lost their State of Innocence, they forfeited, together with That, their Title to eternal Life. And since they had hereby offended against infinite Goodness, and offered an Affront at once to all the Divine Attributes and Perfections; it was impossible they should ever make Reparation for their Fault, or satisfy that Justice, which they had offended. The original Rectitude of their Nature being lost, they contracted from thenceforth a most prevalent Corruption, and unavoidable Propensity to Evil; which

which is propagated from them, down to their late Posterity. So that the whole Race of Mankind is involved in the fatatal Consequences of their Fall; and had been liable, together with them, to God's Wrath and Damnation; if no way had been found, for Satisfaction to be made to his offended Justice. But *behold the Goodness and Severity of God!* his *Severity* towards Sin, expressed in his refusing to pardon it, without such Satisfaction made, as being worthy of his Majesty and Honour to accept, might secure the Esteem and Veneration of his Laws: His *Goodness*, in condescending to most gracious Terms of Reconciliation and Agreement; to covenant for Man's Impunity, and accept of a vicarious Punishment. Thus immediately upon the Fall he promised, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head**. Upon this *seed of the woman*, we elsewhere find, it pleased him to *lay the Iniquity of us all.* He underwent the Punishment, which our Sins had deserved, and *by his Stripes* alone *we* can be *healed.* SERM. VII.

This is that Saviour, of whose Birth the *Angels* brought the *Shepherds* News. And since such and so express are the Declarations made, in Scripture, of his Mediatorial Office; it may be just matter of Wonder and Surprize, any Creatures should be found such perfect Contradictions to themselves, even

* Gen. iii. 15.

SERM. VII. whilſt they moſt pretend to Reaſon; as to confeſs the Authority of theſe Scriptures, and yet deny the Virtue of his Satisfaction. How weak a Subterfuge muſt it be, and how little agreeable to the Style of Scripture, to ſuppoſe, that the whole Scene of his bitter Agony and Death, had no higher Ends in View, than ſuch as theſe,---to confirm the Truths he had delivered, by his unſhaken Conſtancy; —and to ſet us an Example of Humility and Reſignation, and of a reſolute Perſeverance in the Profeſſion of our Faith? As if it were in this Senſe, the Scripture tells us, that *he gave himſelf a ranſom for all!* As if thus he could be ſaid to have *died for* Us, (who muſt otherwiſe have died eternally ourſelves) to have born *our ſins upon the croſs*, and by his Blood to have expiated or made Atonement for them!

That he was thus to make Expiation or Atonement for the Sins of Mankind, is implied in the Name beſtowed upon him in the Text, THE CHRIST. A *Name* given him upon account of thoſe *Offices*, to which he was anointed by the Father; as a *Prophet*, to teach and to inſtruct his Church; as a *King*, to rule and govern it; and as a *Prieſt*, laſtly, to offer up himſelf once for all, a perfect and unblemiſhed Sacrifice, and to make for ever Interceſſion for us.

But in regard, *no man can redeem his brother, or make atonement unto God for him*;

it remains, that the Perſon thus undertaking to redeem us, and accordingly accepted of God for our Redeemer, muſt be more than Man. And therefore it is not without a particular Emphaſis, that the Angel has added to the Character of this Saviour, in the Text, not only that he is *Chriſt*, but that he is *Chriſt the Lord*. The *Chriſt*, or anointed of the Lord, is a Title due to God's Vicegerents upon Earth. But the Character of CHRIST THE LORD, is more exalted and ſublime, and belongs only to him, whom the Prophet calls THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; the Apoſtle calls, *the Lord from heaven*; and who being coequal and coeternal with the Father, is *God of Gods, and Lord of Lords*. For ſo we find the Word LORD, both in the *new*, and in very valuable Verſions of the *old Teſtament*, and (as is probably thought) in the *Maſorethical* Punctation of the *Hebrew* itſelf, (we find it, I ſay,) ſubſtituted inſtead of that *incommunicable Name*, which is never given to any one, who by Nature is not God. But how this Lord from Heaven, this eternal God, ſhould undergo the Puniſhment due to ſinful men, is a Myſtery far exceeding our Capacity: and yet capable of ſome Sort of Explication, if we would attend to the SERM. VII.

2. *Second* Thing to be conſidered, namely, the Manner of his Coming, as deſcribed here in the Text, where he is ſaid to be *born*. The way for him to redeem Mankind was by becom-

SERM. VII. becoming Man himſelf: that ſo Satisfaction might be made to the Divine Juſtice, in the ſame Nature, in which it was offended. Of ſuch Importance is it, that we believe our Saviour's *Manhood*, and not with the *Marcionite* Hereticks of old, ſuppoſe that he had only a fantaſtick Body, and received no real Subſtance of the *bleſſed Virgin*. For that the Divine Nature, which is impaſſible, ſhould undergo the Puniſhment due to ſinful Men, is not only inexplicable and unconceivable, but even blaſphemous and full of Contradiction. And yet on the other hand, that an imaginary Suffering ſhould have a real Efficacy for our Atonement, is equally monſtrous and abſurd. And therefore we have Cauſe to rejoice, that there is Evidence abundantly ſufficient to convince a ſober and conſidering Man, that our bleſſed Saviour was "perfect Man, of a "reaſonable Soul, and human Fleſh ſubſiſt-"ing."

We are aſſured, that he was conceived and born, circumciſed and baptized; that he held frequent Conferences with his Diſciples, and the other *Jews*; that he eat and drank openly and in Public; that he ſhewed ſome Expreſſions both of Sorrow and of Joy; that he was examined by the *Roman* Governor, buffeted and ſcourged by his Soldiers; and above all, that he was crucified at laſt, and expiring upon the Croſs, left his dead Body to the Mercy and Examination of his Enemies. So

that if either the Partiality, which may be thought to have ſwayed his *Diſciples*; or the Indifference, with which his Doctrine was received among the *Heathens*; or the Virulence and Malice, with which the *Jews* were prejudiced againſt it, could have diſcovered him to have been a man no otherwiſe than in appearance, or in outward ſhew; either his Friends muſt have given a different Account from what they do; or elſe their Doctrine had only ſerv'd to carry on a ſpiritual Juggle and Impoſture: and his enemies, no doubt, would gladly have embraced any Opportunity of diſcovering the cheat. SERM. VII.

Nor is it leſs to be conſidered, that He had a human *Soul*, as well as *Body* of Fleſh. This is included in the Notion of a perfect Man, (as was before intimated) and muſt be carefully aſſerted; leſt we fall into the Hereſy of *Apollinarius*, who ſuppoſed the Place of his Soul to be ſupplied by his Divinity, and conſequently denied the whole human Nature to have undergone the Puniſhment, which the whole human Nature had incurred. A point of Heterodoxy, which ſome of our modern *Arians* have adopted into their Syſtem!

But whilſt we are thus careful to maintain, that *Chriſt* is *Man*, we are not to forget, that he is *God* too. 'Tis upon This the Satisfaction and Merit of his Death depends. 'Tis This, which gives us a comfortable Proſpect of

SERM. VII. of God's Favour and Reconciliation: the Dignity of his Perſon being ſuch, as made the Puniſhment he underwent, tho' not preciſely the ſame we had deſerved; yet accepted inſtead of it, and ſufficient to procure our Impunity; and whoſe Merit, moreover, is ſufficient to procure us a Reward of immortal Happineſs and Glory.

When we aſſert thus his Divine and human Nature, we muſt take great heed we deſtroy not that Unity of Perſon, which is required in the *Chriſt*. For if we ſo divide his Natures, as to make of them two diſtinct Perſons, which is the Hereſy charged upon *Neſtorius*; we ſhall perfectly deſtroy the whole Scheme of our Redemption: Since thus it will follow, that he was not God who ſuffered: And if meer Man be unable to make Atonement for us, and work out our Salvation; it will follow from hence farther, that He who ſuffered, did not atone for us, nor work out our Salvation.

This hypoſtatical Union of both Natures in him, is indeed too wonderful to be conceived. A Knowledge it is, too excellent for us; we cannot attain unto it. How God Almighty, who fills all places with his Preſence, but is circumſcribed by none; who is infinite and incomprehenſible, unmeaſurable, unconfined, and to whom even our Imagination, luxuriant as it is, can ſet no Bounds; How He, I ſay, ſhould be cloath-

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ed with a human Body, or incloſed in the Virgin's Womb, *i. e.* ſhould be perſonally united to the human Nature, muſt be confeſſed myſterious, and above the reach of our Capacity. But this ought never to be urged, as an Argument againſt it: Since even the Union of Soul and Body in ourſelves, certain and unconteſted tho' it be, will yet be found, if we would narrowly examine it, to be unconceivable. We are, in the *Pſalmiſt*'s Expreſſion, *fearfully and wonderfully made*, not only in reſpect of the Formation of our Bodies, but of the Creation and Union of our Souls. And therefore we may wonder indeed, but we muſt not think it incredible, that the hypoſtatical Union of the Divine and human Nature in *Chriſt*, ſhould exceed not only our Expreſſion, but even our Underſtanding and Imagination: Since the neareſt Illuſtration we can give of it, is far ſhort of it indeed; but an undeniable Myſtery, which we carry conſtantly about us. "For "as the reaſonable Soul and Fleſh is one "Man, ſo God and Man is one Chriſt." SERM. VII.

3. *Thirdly*, we are, in the next Place, to conſider the Time of his Nativity, *unto you is born*, this Day, *a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.*

This was that *Fulneſs of Time*, when God had determined to *ſend forth his Son, made of a woman*, and *made under the law*. The *Jewiſh* Commonwealth was now about to be diſ-

SERM. VII. solved, having continued long enough to fulfil the Prophecy of *Jacob*, that *the Scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh*, or *Meſſiah*, ſhould *come*. Their Temple was not yet demoliſhed by the *Romans*; nor was it conſiſtent with God's Veracity it ſhould; till this *deſire of all nations* was come, and had *filled that houſe with glory*, greater than *Solomon*'s could boaſt of. His Harbinger, St. *John Baptiſt*, who was to introduce him, and prepare his Way, was born ſix months before. And by that time *Jeſus* himſelf ſhould come to *thirty* Years of Age, the *ſixty nine weeks*, foretold by *Daniel*, would expire, at the Concluſion whereof he was to enter upon his Office; and both by his own Preaching, and that of his Apoſtles, *to confirm the covenant with many for one week*, *i. e.* for *ſeven* Years longer, *in the midſt of* which ſpace, *he was to be cut off* himſelf, and ſo *to make the Sacrifice and the Oblation to ceaſe*; *i. e.* by the perfect and ſufficient Sacrifice of himſelf upon the Croſs, to put an End to the ceremonial Inſtitutions of the Law of *Moſes*. Thus did the Time of *Chriſt*'s coming into the World, anſwer exactly to thoſe Prophecies, by which it was foretold. And accordingly it is ſufficiently clear, from the Hiſtory of the *new Teſtament*, that the *Jews* of that Time did eagerly expect the Approach of their *Meſſiah*.

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Perhaps, it might not be improper to take Notice farther, upon this Occaſion, that the Day of our Saviour's Nativity, however diſputed by ſome learned Men, has yet been judged by others, to anſwer preciſely to the *eighth* of the *Kalends of January*, (which is the *twenty fifth day of December)* in the *Roman Kalendar*. This I add, not becauſe I think the Church has not Authority ſufficient, to appoint and ſet apart a Day, for the Celebration of this ineſtimable Mercy, even tho' the preciſe Time of it were not exactly known; but becauſe it has been urged by ſome, as an Objection againſt any Celebration of his Nativity at all, that the exact time of it cannot be fixed. Which yet ſeems to be enough confirm'd for a matter of this nature; if we will allow any weight (and ſome weight ſurely ought to be allowed) to the Tradition of the Church: it being certain (as a learned *Antiquary* of our Nation obſerves *) that on the *twenty-fifth* day of *December*, That Feaſt hath ever been ſetled, in the *weſtern* Church; from whence the *eaſtern* alſo anciently receiv'd it. SERM. VII.

The Exception, which ſome learned Men have made againſt it, from the conſideration of the *Courſes* of the *Prieſts* in the ſervice of the *Temple*; by computing from the time of *Judas Maccabeus*'s Dedication of the Temple, to the time when *Zacharias* was ſtruck

* Selden's Theanthropos.

dumb,

SERM. VII. dumb, can be of no weight: unleſs they could be ſure, both what Term of Years paſſed between theſe two Occurrences; and with what Claſs of the Prieſts, *Judas* began his Inſtauration. For if either, the Number of Years be in diſpute, (as I conceive it muſt) or *Judas* began with another Claſs of Prieſts, than they ſuppoſe he did; (which at leaſt is not improbable;) then their Argument from theſe *Courſes* is not ſufficient to overthrow the Credit and Authority of that Tradition, againſt which it is brought; and ſo is utterly incapable of inferring their Concluſion.

4. *Fourthly*, I come now to the laſt thing to be conſider'd under this Head, namely, the *place* of our Saviour's Nativity; *Unto you is born this day, in the* City of DAVID, *a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.* Thus did it pleaſe God, that he who is deſcribed, as *of the houſe and lineage of David*, and of whom *David* himſelf was but a Type, ſhould have his Birth in the ſame City where *David* had, to make the parallel more compleat and exact. But there is, in truth, yet ſomething farther in the caſe. For this City of *David* was *Bethlehem*; whence we find his Father called *Jeſſe* the *Bethlehemite* *. And from hence it was, the Prophet *Micah* had foretold, *he ſhould come forth, that was to be ruler in Iſrael, whoſe goings forth had been from of old, from everlaſting* †. Which Prophecy, tho'

* 1 Sam. xvi. 1. † Mic. v. 2.

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ſome have abſurdly enough underſtood it of *Zerubbabel*, was yet ſufficiently known by the ancient *Jewiſh* Church, to refer to the *Meſſiah*. For ſo, when *Herod aſſembled the chief Prieſts and Scribes of the people, to demand of them where Chriſt ſhould be born*; we find them unanimous in this reſolution of his Queſtion, that he ſhould be born *in Bethleham* of *Judea: for thus it is written in the Prophet, And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the leaſt among the Princes of Judah: for out of thee ſhall come a governor, that ſhall rule my people Iſrael* *. And afterwards the *Jews* appear to have underſtood it, as the ſenſe of Scripture, not only that *Chriſt cometh of the ſeed of David, but likewiſe out of the* town of Bethlehem, *where David was* ||. And ſince *Hebrew* names are uſually ſignificant, and impoſed to ſome ſpecial end or purpoſe; perhaps it would not be amiſs to take notice, that the name of this City ſignifies *the houſe or place of bread*. And what Place fitter for his Birth and reception, who was, and is *the living bread, which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die* †?

SERM. VII.

Thus far, of the Meſſage upon which the Angel was ſent; which was the FIRST thing propoſed. I come now to the

II. SECOND Head of Diſcourſe, to inſiſt upon the great Advantage and Importance of this Meſſage; as it is intimated in the Preface

* Mat. ii. 4, 5, 6. || John vii. 42. † John vi. 51, 52.

with

SERM. VII. with which it is introduced: *And the Angel said unto them, fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

The Dignity of the Messenger alone might suggest his Message to be business of Importance. For those *ministring Spirits* use not to be sent upon Errands of little or no Consequence. But yet it is not necessary, that the import of their Errand should always be matter of Advantage and Joy. And therefore it was not wholly without reason, that the Shepherds felt some Apprehensions and Misgivings at the sight of this glorious Appearance; and that when *the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, they were* (as the *Evangelist* informs us) *sore afraid.* To correct these Misgivings, and raise their Spirits from the present Consternation and Despondency, He begins his Discourse to them with a *fear not*; and then proceeds to give them such a general Description of the News, he was about to deliver, as plainly shews he wanted words fit to set forth and express so great a Benefit. *For behold* (says he in the first Place, to raise their expectations, *behold*) *I bring you good tidings.*

And surely to men, who are sensible of their own Sins and Corruptions, the News of a Saviour being born must needs be highly acceptable. For if we reflect upon that dread-

ful

ful Punishment, which is due to our Sins, and which it had not been possible for us to escape by any power of our own; from which the satisfaction of *Christ*'s death has rescued us, and set us free; and instead whereof, his Merits have purchased for us everlasting Happiness. Sure we shall have reason to confess, that *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save Sinners.* And therefore it was very proper to add farther, that these *good tidings* were *tidings of Joy.* For tho' every good or happy Event be, in some degree, a matter of Joy; yet there are some of such a nature, as would not have occasioned us any Disturbance or Uneasiness, if they had never happen'd. But the birth of a Saviour, to recover lost and miserable Men, to redeem them from Damnation, to reinstate them in God's Favour, and restore them to a glorious Immortality, is a Mercy, the absence whereof must have created Sorrow, endless and unspeakable. And therefore the Angel very properly proceeds, in his gradation, to represent it as matter of great Joy. For where indeed can we find a greater occasion for our Joy, than the Contemplation of that Misery, from which this Saviour rescued us, and that immortal Happiness, to which we are entitled by his Merits? If the greatness of the Benefit bestowed may be allowed, to justify the greatness of that Person's Joy, who

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SERM. VII. receives it; then ſurely the News of the greateſt Benefit, that ever was beſtowed upon Mankind, muſt be traduced and vilified, if it may not be allowed to paſs for *good tidings of great Joy*. The Patriarch *Abraham was glad*, when with a ſtedfaſt Faith *he beheld this day*, though far diſtant and to come. And behold, with what unuſual Joy, the holy *Baptiſt* was tranſported, when, as yet unborn, he leap'd within his Mother's Womb, as the *bleſſed Virgin* gave account of her immaculate Conception.

But becauſe the extent of any Favour, is an Advantage by no means to be neglected; it ought to be conſider'd farther, that the Subject of theſe *Tidings* was not only ſuperlatively good, but likewiſe diffuſive of itſelf; not concerning *this* or *that* Man only, but the whole race of Mankind. *They are good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to* ALL PEOPLE: *High and low, rich and poor, one with another* *: All Ages, Countries and Conditions are concern'd in them.

The ſhortneſs of the time will not allow me to enlarge upon the Controverſies, which are moved, of univerſal or reſtrain'd Redemption. And ſo clear indeed is the whole tenor of the Goſpel, and ſo expreſs the Doctrine of our Church in this Particular; as may, I hope, make any enlargement upon it needleſs in this Place. If the Favour were confin'd within a narrow compaſs, perhaps this might be

* Pſal. xlix. 2.

matter of Joy indeed to ſome, but it muſt grieve the reſt. Or indeed, I know not, whether any would find ſolid Satisfaction in it for the preſent; ſince tho' all might labour and ſtrive after it, yet they muſt do it all with equal uncertainty. Whereas now we have ſufficient encouragement to work: becauſe no one, who works ſincerely, ſhall fail of his Reward. For this *grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* ‖. Which brings me, in order, to the SERM. VII.

III. THIRD and laſt thing propoſed, namely, to make ſome Reflections upon what has been ſaid. And

1. *Firſt*, from the myſtical manner of the hypoſtatick Union of two Natures in *Chriſt*, we may learn, not to expect, we ſhould be able to comprehend the Myſteries of our Religion; but to reſt ſatisfied with thoſe Notices of them, which God has been pleaſed to reveal to us. It is indeed our Duty, and ordinarily "neceſſary to Salvation: to believe rightly "the Incarnation of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. For "the right Faith is, that we believe and con- "feſs: that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of "God, is God and man; God of the Sub-

‖ Tit. ii. 11, &c.

SERM. VII. "ſtance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man of the Subſtance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God, and perfect man: of a reaſonable ſoul, and human fleſh ſubſiſting; Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood. Who altho' he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Chriſt; One; not by converſion of the Godhead into fleſh: but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confuſion of Subſtance: but by unity of Perſon. For as the reaſonable ſoul and fleſh is one Man: ſo God and Man is one Chriſt *."

Thus far, we have grounds from Scripture to proceed, in the Explication of this Myſtery. But there is a great deal of difference between believing a thing *true*, and underſtanding *how* it ſhould be *ſo*. *Thro' faith we underſtand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; ſo that things which are ſeen, were not made of things which do appear* †. And yet how, this whole viſible Creation ſhould be formed out of nothing, is unaccountable; and muſt be referred to the Omnipotence of the Creator. How much leſs ſhould we expect to comprehend the Nature of God, and *find out the Almighty to perfection?* To make us believe an Article, nothing more is required than *ſufficient* Evidence of its being true. And what higher Evidence can poſſibly be had,

* Athanaſ. Creed. † Heb. xi. 3.

than

than the infallible Teſtimony of God, who SERM. can neither err nor deceive? But in order to VII. comprehend and explain the Nature of ſuch Truths, there is many times wanting a more extenſive Knowledge, and deeper Penetration, than our Nature is capable of attaining: And therefore if we can make out, that They are contained in the Scriptures, and that thoſe Scriptures are the word of God; what matter, whether we be able to explain, *how theſe things can be?* Let this only put us upon exclaiming with St. *Paul, O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments,* (we may add likewiſe his *Nature* and *Attributes*) *and his ways paſt finding out!*

2. *Secondly,* Since *Chriſt* was given to redeem us from our Sins, let us learn from hence to behave ourſelves like people, that are ſenſible of ſo great a Benefit. *Gratitude* alone to this Almighty Benefactor, ſhould require and exact of us a willing Obedience to his Precepts, and Obſervance of his Laws. But our engagements to this will be yet much ſtronger, in point of *Intereſt*, when we conſider, that even *that* Benefit it ſelf will be quite fruſtrated and loſt without it. For we are perfectly miſtaken, if we imagine the Satisfaction and Merits of our Saviour *Chriſt*, were deſigned to indulge us in a lazy and unactive Security. He died indeed to redeem us from that Sentence of Damnation, which we could

SERM. VII. not have escaped; and to procure us such gracious Assistance, as may enable us to observe those Conditions, upon which the Happiness, he has purchased for us, is suspended. But still it is in our own power, thro' God's Grace, to observe; or thro' our own Corruption and Depravity, to neglect those Conditions. And if we should neglect them, the gracious Design of his Death is frustrated, as to our own particulars. For tho' he be indeed the *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, and his Birth was therefore *good tidings of great joy to all people*; yet this ought to be interpreted, with regard not to the *Effect*, but the *Virtue* of his Sufferings; to that Effect, which they were *capable* of producing; not that which they did *actually* produce. He died a Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole world, and to restore fallen mankind to the Favour and loving Kindness of God. And therefore all Men have abundant reason to rejoice. But still it is left to themselves, whether they will accept this Benefit or no; *i. e.* whether they will comply with those Terms, upon which only it is vouchsafed.

3. *Thirdly*, and to conclude, it may be proper to take Notice farther, upon this occasion, with what sort of Joy we ought to solemnize and celebrate this Festival. The Benefit we commemorate extends both to our Souls and Bodies. And therefore it is reasonable, that God should be glorified in *both*. In our

our *Bodies*, not only as they are concerned to expreſs the Devotion of our Souls in the Worſhip of God; but likewiſe by making ſuch Proviſion for their Suſtenance, as may conduce more particularly to create Chearfulneſs and Joy. Always provided, this to be done within the bounds of Decency and Moderation. For whenever we exceed them, (which, alas, there is reaſon to believe is frequently the caſe) we are ſo far from *glorifying God with our bodies*, that we abuſe them, rather to diſhonour and deſpiſe him. SERM. VII.

And give me leave to add, that the *Rich* ought not, on this occaſion eſpecially, to be unmindful of the *Poor*, but as it is ſaid of the *Jews*, after their return from Captivity) *whilſt they eat the fat and drink the ſweet* themſelves; let them likewiſe take care to *ſend portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared* *. Let not the Memory of a Saviour's Nativity, to redeem us from Damnation, be leſs eſteem'd by us, than their temporal Deliverance from Captivity at *Babylon*. Let there be no cries of Widows or Orphans heard among us, to diſturb the Joy of this ſacred Solemnity. But as the Mercy we commemorate is matter of Joy to all People, in its own Nature: So let them, who have Ability, in fact promote it in their ſeveral Stations, by making the Widow's Heart to ſing for Joy.

* Neh. viii. 10.

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But indeed the chief part of our Joy ought to be ſpiritual, ſuch as may imply a grateful Senſe of this invaluable Mercy, and be productive of a good Life. Without This, the ſervice of our Lips, and all outward expreſſions of Joy will be of no Value. It is This! which makes our Services, imperfect as they are, yet *accepted of God in the beloved* ||. This! which is the ſpiritual Life of the Saints here on earth, and ſhall conſtitute their moſt tranſporting Happineſs in another life to all Eternity.

With this Diſpoſition of Soul therefore, let us now approach to the holy Table, where we may behold the Son of God (who was born, as on this Day, at *Bethlehem*) *evidently ſet forth crucified for us.* There! may we receive *that Bread, which cometh down from heaven*, and is capable of nouriſhing our Souls unto eternal Life: There! That Wine, which may put true Joy and Gladneſs in our Hearts; may add new warmth to our Virtue, and vigour to our Zeal. Let us therefore, with thankful Hearts, receive theſe holy Myſteries, and with the wiſe Men of the *Eaſt*, let us fall down and worſhip the Saviour, whom they repreſent; and offer him the Sacrifice of our Praiſe and Thankſgiving; confeſſing it to be "meet, right and our bounden Duty, to give "thanks unto God the Father Almighty, and "to Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord,

|| Eph. i. 6.

"who

" who by the operation of the Holy Ghoſt was made very Man, of the Subſtance of the Virgin Mary his Mother, and that without ſpot of Sin, to make us clean from all Sin *."

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Theſe are Reflections, which at this Seaſon eſpecially, ſhould fill our Souls. *For unto us was born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Chriſt the Lord.* To whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghoſt* be all honour, *&c.*

* Communion Service.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

Reflections on the Vanity of Worldly Purſuits.

ECCLES. i. 4.

One generation paſſeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

SERM. VIII.

THIS Book is uſually ſuppoſed to have been written by *Solomon*, in the latter end of his Life, as a penitential Reflection on the Vanity and Worthleſneſs of thoſe Purſuits, which Men are here engaged in; except their Views be directed to a better Proſpect, and led to terminate in thoſe great Ends of Religion, which only are worthy of a reaſonable Nature, and capable of giving Satisfaction.

To this purpoſe, he begins his Book, with obſerving, that all things in the world are Vanity; which he exemplifies throughout, by an induction of ſeveral Particulars, till he comes at laſt to the *concluſion of the whole matter*; that we ſhould learn to *fear God and keep his commandments*; *for this is the whole duty of man:* becauſe there will come a future day of reckoning, when *God ſhall bring every work*

work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil *. SERM. VIII.

There are ſeveral Expreſſions and Remarks interſperſed, which, if taken by themſelves, might be interpreted to a libertine Senſe; and ſeem to countenance a licentious and voluptuous way of living: Which ſome have made an Objection to the authenticalneſs of the Book, as unworthy the Pen of an inſpired Writer. But ſince the Drift and Tenor of the whole is manifeſtly calculated to promote the Ends of Religion, and teach the Vanity of every thing below; it is moſt abſurd, thoſe Paſſages ſhould be taken in a Senſe deſtructive of the general Deſign; ſo long as they are *capable* of being interpreted in a manner, that is fairly agreeable and conſiſtent with it. They may rather be conſider'd, as the Objections of diſſolute and worldly Perſons, which are ſolv'd and anſwer'd by other counter-Obſervations: or as ſpoken *ex hypotheſi:* If there *were* no other life after this; which yet is ſhewn to be an unreaſonable Suppoſition; in conſequence of which, the concluſions, which are built upon it, are unreaſonable too: or laſtly, as *ironical* Conceſſions, which are only admitted for their overthrow, in order to expoſe the Abſurdity and Folly of them more effectually.

Either of theſe Methods of Interpretation will ſave the Credit of this ancient Preacher;

* Eccleſ. xii. 13, 14.

and

SERM. VIII. and give a Senſe not unworthy of one, who wrote by Inſpiration: or ſometimes it may be, the meaning of a Word is not rightly underſtood, but that which is explain'd to a libertine or irreligious Senſe, may admit of ſuch conſtruction, as very well conſiſts with the Doctrine and Sentiments of true Religion.

Thus, the Sentence of the Text may be thought, at the firſt view, to favour of the Atheiſtical Notion, of the Eternity of Matter, and the enduring of this earthly Globe, without End or Diſſolution; notwithſtanding the continual ſucceſſion and change of its Inhabitants. But when it is conſider'd, that the word *for ever* is not always, nor indeed uſually underſtood, of an abſolute and proper *Eternity*; but many times intends only a long Duration, in compariſon of ſuch things, as are but fleeting and tranſitory: This opens us an eaſy Expoſition of the Paſſage in view: how whilſt the generations of men are of a ſhort Duration, and paſs away in quick Succeſſion to each other; the Earth the mean while endures thro' them all, and bears them one after another, engaged in the ſame ſearches, which their Predeceſſors had made in vain.

It is brought as the firſt Proof or Inſtance of worldly Vanity, to ſhew, that a Man, who looks no farther than the things before him, has no real Profit of all the Labour that he takes under the Sun. One Age after another is projecting and purſuing perpetual Schemes of

of Happineſs below, and without bringing any thing to tolerable Effect, leaves others after them to go on in the ſame round; whilſt the Earth itſelf continues in it's old Situation, and breeds up theſe Succeſſions of Men to labour in the ſame Vanity. SERM. VIII.

This is illuſtrated by two or three Alluſions to Nature, which ſhew, that all the motion and buſtle of the Elements, conclude with leaving things juſt as they were, in reſpect of the general Order and Oeconomy; and go their rounds over again, without producing any new Effects. *The ſun alſo ariſeth, and the ſun goeth down, and haſteth to the place where he aroſe* *. He goes no other than his appointed Courſe, and after a Revolution of many Years, will have made no progreſs from his firſt Station. So alſo *the wind goeth toward the ſouth, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits* †. Tho' This be inconſtant in its Motions, and depends upon a Cauſe, that is leſs known or underſtood; yet thus far it is ſimilar and like the reſt, that it never reſts in any Point, but changes often thro' them all, and never comes to any ſtay or conſtancy. Once more, all *the rivers run into the ſea, yet the ſea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again* ‖. The great Receptacle of Waters, which is con-

* Eccleſ. i. 5. † Ver. 6. ‖ Ver. 7.

tinually

SERM. VIII. tinually drawn off, either by the Exhalation of Vapours, or by ſubterraneous Paſſages, becomes, by that means, the Fountain of *Springs* and *Rivers*; which emptying again into the Sea, ſupply the waſte that is made by that continual Draught; and without either overfilling or leaving room for a deficiency, do ſerve to carry on the round in a perpetual Succeſſion. Thus every thing in Nature, tho' in conſtant Motion, returns but to the ſame Situation; and tho' *all things be ſo full of labour, that man cannot utter it*; yet *the thing which hath been, is that which ſhall be; and that which is done, is that which ſhall be done; and there is no new thing under the ſun* *.

In proceeding farther on this Subject, it will be proper

I. To offer a few known Inſtances of the Vanity of worldly Purſuits, with the Labour and Fatigue that does attend them, without any great Progreſſion to be made by them, or real Emolument ariſing from them. And then,

II. To make ſome pertinent Reflections, whereby this Conſideration of the Worthleſsneſs of ſecular Enjoyments, may be turned to our ſpiritual Improvement.

I. FIRST therefore, I begin with offering a few known Inſtances of the Vanity of worldly Purſuits, with the Labour and Fatigue that does attend them, without any

* Eccles. i. 8. 9.

great

great Progreſſion to be made by them, or real Emolument ariſing from them. And for proof of this, I ſhall inſtance only in theſe three Particulars, that they are *uncertain*, *unſatisfactory*, *untenable*. And, SERM. VIII.

1. *Firſt*, I ſay, that the Purſuits of this World are attended with great *Uncertainty*; ſo that it is very doubtful, whether we ever gain the Point we aim at: it is very uſual for Men to fall ſhort of the End or Deſign they had in view, and ſee that all their Labour and Fatigue has been in vain. It is *Solomon*'s Obſervation in this Book of *Eccleſiaſtes*, that *the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong, neither yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man alſo knoweth not his time, as the fiſhes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the ſnares; ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them**. As the Birds or Fiſhes are caught ſuddenly, whilſt they are ſporting in the Air or Waters, or diligent in ſearch of their Food; ſo men are oftentimes involved in Calamity, by ſudden unforeſeen Accidents; whilſt they were little apprehenſive of the Danger, which hangs over them, and earneſtly engaged in the Purſuit of Profit or of Pleaſure. Or if they eſcape any great and remarkable Calamities; yet

* Eccles. ix. 11, 12.

there

SERM. VIII. there are so many others engaged in the same Views with themselves, that they naturally cross and disappoint each other; and for *one* that succeeds in his Endeavours of this Kind, you hear of *many* that come off with Disappointment. Nay even he, who succeeds, is rarely without other Views and Prospects, in which he fails of Success, which embitters the Enjoyment of all his Affluence; and makes him rather disturbed and uneasy, for that which he *has not*, than satisfied with what he *has*.

There is little need to enlarge upon an Observation, which the Experience of human Life does every Day confirm and exemplify to us in great Variety. The splendid Appearances of Fortune are but as the large Prizes in a Lottery, which can fall but to a few Hands: and even they, who gain them, by gaping after more, do in great Measure lose the Relish of their Enjoyments; that their very Success seems checquered with Loss and Disappointment. Nay even what they have gained, is perpetually liable to be lost or wrested from them; either by the Treachery or Violence of others; or else by the various Casualties of Time, and what Men are apt to call Inconstancy of Fortune. In every View the Pursuit of worldly Possessions is uncertain; the Pursuers of them do frequently miscarry, and meet with Disappointment; their Success in one Affair, is damped by their miscarrying in

in Others; and they are hard put to it, to keep what they have gained; which often ſlips out of their hands immediately, and leaves them in more anxiety, than if it had never been obtained. This cannot but be a great Abatement of the reliſh and ſatisfaction to be found in them. But abſtracting from theſe Conſiderations, we have a SERM. VIII.

2. *Second* Argument, of the Vanity of worldly Purſuits; becauſe, even when moſt ſucceſsful, they are yet *unſatisfactory*.

Whatever opinion men have formed of the Enjoyments of Life, whilſt they viewed them in other hands, and beheld the gay and glittering Appearance; yet when they come to the Poſſeſſion, they never fail of finding ſomething incompleat; ſome Defect or other ſtill remains to abate their Happineſs: Like ſome ruinous Caſtle, which however at a Diſtance it dazzles the Eyes of the Spectators, whilſt it reflects the brightneſs of the Sun upon them; yet when they come up to it, the glittering Appearance fails: Deformity then ſucceeds, inſtead of Beauty; and they will hardly find a proper Shelter againſt the Viciſſitudes of Wind and Weather. There are perſonal or domeſtick Inconveniences, which do oftentimes embitter the Courſe of the moſt affluent Fortune; and make the Enjoyments, which ſeem moſt deſirable, to become perfectly inſipid, and of no account. A crazy Body, or an anxious Mind; Children, or Ser-

SERM. VIII. vants, that are ſtubborn and untractable; the Averſion of thoſe we love, or the Ingratitude of thoſe we have befriended, ſhall ſo vitiate the Taſte, and pall the Reliſh of all outward Acquiſitions; that whatever we *poſſeſs*, we ſhall but very improperly be ſaid to *enjoy* it; or perceive any ſolid Satisfaction or Complacency of Mind in it. Or if we have leſs Trial from theſe Misfortunes; yet there are a thouſand Wants in the Courſe of human Life, which cannot be foreſeen, or provided againſt, with any Certainty.

The Men, who look only on the outward Appearance, will be apt to judge thoſe happy, whom they ſee poſſeſſed of the Conveniencies of Fortune, ſurrounded with all Wealth and Proſperity. But this muſt be a very imperfect Rule of Judgment, and often liable to Error and Miſtake; except they could ſee them in their Houſes and Retirements, nay and the very inmoſt Receſſes of their Souls, to perceive, with what Reliſh they uſe theſe Enjoyments, and what Abatement there is made by inward Diſcontent and Uneaſineſs. They are poſſeſſed, it may be, of all outward Emoluments, which we imagine requiſite to make them eaſy and contented: But ſtill, if their Deſires extend farther, they are no leſs impatient for gratifying Theſe, than Perſons in a lower Station are for theirs. Tho' *Haman* was the prime Favourite of the *Perſian* Monarch, and ſeemed poſſeſſed of all the Wealth

Wealth and Honour, that a Subject could wiſh or aim at; yet ſo long as there appeared to be any independent of him; ſo long as *Mordecai* was ſuffered to ſit *in the King's gate*, all his Acquiſitions availed him nothing: *When Haman ſaw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath* *. And tho' *Ahab* ſate upon the *Throne* of *Iſrael*, yet all his Wealth and Authority grew taſteleſs and inſipid; no Satisfaction could be found in his abounding Fortune, except *Naboth*'s Vineyard might be added to his other Acquiſitions; and the Rights of his Neighbour ſubmitted to his Will and Pleaſure. SERM. VIII.

It is not then, from outward Enjoyments, (even tho' they were capable of affording greater Satisfaction than really they are, and in leſs danger of being interrupted by the malice and oppoſitions of other Men;) It is not from the greateſt run imaginable of perſonal Health and Proſperity, that we may hope for true and ſolid Satisfaction; except our Minds be firſt prepared and cultivated by a juſt Senſe of Religion, and ſeaſoned with ſuch Knowledge and Fear of God, as may keep the Paſſions in due order and decorum, and qualify us for enjoying what we have.

3. *Thirdly*, The laſt Conſideration, that was mentioned, to argue the Vanity of worldly Purſuits, was this; that the things purſued

* Eſther iii. 5.

SERM. VIII. are, when attained, *untenable*. By which I mean, not only (what was ſuggeſted before) that we are liable to loſe them by Misfortune, Treachery or Violence; but that the condition of our own Being is ſuch, that we cannot long continue to enjoy them. This is the Purport of *Solomon*'s Remark in the Text—*one generation paſſeth away, and another generation cometh.* It is the Condition of human Nature, to be here in a fleeting and tranſitory State. *Man that is born of a woman hath but a ſhort time to live, and is full of miſery. He cometh up as a flower and is cut down: he fleeth as it were a ſhadow, and never continueth in one ſtay.* The ſucceſſive Ages of Mankind have been alike engaged, in labouring for the Honours and Poſſeſſions of this Life: And yet alike they have made haſte, to leave them to others, that came after, and forſake the Enjoyments they had ſo greatly coveted. The Frailty of their own Nature, would not admit of any long Continuance. The Conſtitution of their Bodies was not formed, to endure throughout many Years; and tho' we ſhould abſtract from the many Caſualties, to which Mankind are expoſed, whereby their Lives may be ſhortened thro' Treachery or Violence; from all Suppoſition of the immediate and ſpecial Hand of God, giving his Commiſſion to the Arrows of Death, and ſending out Diſeaſes for a quicker execution; from all Accuſation of their

their own Error and Miſconduct, which may haſten their Decay by Intemperance or Indiſcretion; tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe every Remedy to be uſed, which either Nature can ſupply, or Art can deviſe, for the preventing of Sickneſs, and prolonging of Life; yet the neceſſary and unavoidable Decays of Time, will wear out at laſt this Tabernacle of the Body, and oblige the Soul to leave it's Tenement. SERM. VIII.

This ſhews, how all our Schemes and Contrivances for this Life, are directed only to a ſhort and tranſitory State; and when we ſucceed in them, to the utmoſt of our Wiſhes, we are yet ſure not to enjoy the Satisfaction for any long Continuance; we muſt leave our Poſſeſſions to the growing Generation, uncertain to what Hands they ſhall fall, or in what Manner they ſhall be uſed and applied. Tho' the Earth itſelf preſerves its Situation; yet the Inhabitants, one after another, make haſte to leave it; and the Toil and Fatigue, which is calculated for their future Satisfaction, does, by inſenſible Degrees, impair the Fabrick of their Body; and eat out that Time, which is allowed for the Enjoyment of Life.

With what Care and Anxiety do we ſee Men laying themſelves out, to increaſe their Subſtance and Poſſeſſions in the World? And juſt, it may be, as they think they have brought Matters to bear, and flatter themſelves; that they have goods laid up for many Years,

SERM. VIII. and may now indulge themſelves in the luxurious Enjoyment of them: it may be, I ſay, juſt as they reach to this Point of their Wiſhes, the Angel of Death has his Commiſſion, to cut them ſhort; and they are reproached with Folly for overlooking a Matter of ſuch daily Experience; *thou fool*, (ſays God) *this night thy Soul ſhall be required of thee, then whoſe ſhall thoſe things be which thou haſt now provided?*

We have ſeen this exemplified, over and over, in our own memory; and they, who ſucceed to the Poſſeſſions of the former generation, having no better Tenure, than thoſe that went before them, muſt expect to give way to a new race of men; and leave That to others, which it is impoſſible to hold themſelves.

And ſo far of the FIRST thing propoſed: the Inſtances I would offer of the Vanity of Worldly Purſuits. I go on

II. SECONDLY, to make ſome pertinent reflections upon this matter; whereby this conſideration, of the worthleſneſs of ſecular Enjoyments, may be turn'd to our ſpiritual Improvement.

Now the moſt material and moſt natural Reflections, of this kind, will be found to fall under theſe four Particulars, *viz.*

1. That we be not too ſtrongly attached to Enjoyments of ſo little Value.

2. That we learn to look out for true and more ſubſtantial Riches.

3. That

3. That the brevity of Life be well huſ- SERM. banded, and improved to the beſt Purpo- VIII. ſes. And

4. That we be careful to inſtruct the growing generation, to grow wiſe by the Example of the paſt; and give their minds to obſerve thoſe Rules of Religion, which only can conduct them to Felicity.

1. *Firſt* then, I ſay, we ſhould be careful to draw off our Affections, from matters which ſo little deſerve them; to diſengage ourſelves from all the Vanities of Life, that we may not be hamper'd by a vehement Attachment to things, which cannot laſt nor ſatisfy. To ſet a high Value upon That, which has little in it worth our eſteem, does but increaſe the diſappointment; and give an edge to the misfortune, when our expectations are not ſatisfied. And to promiſe ourſelves ſtable Felicity in the enjoyment of That, from which we muſt be ſeparated, is an Argument of great Folly and Infatuation; and little worthy of the Character of a reaſonable Creature. There is no doubt, a preſent convenience, in the enjoyments of this kind; and therefore a proportionable eſteem and endeavour is allow'd to them. Our thankfulneſs to God for the Bleſſings of this temporal Life, ſhould not ſuffer us, either to ſquander them away riotouſly; or to neglect the opportunities we have, of ſecuring or increaſing them. But then this ſhould be done under ſuch reſerves and re-

SERM. VIII. ſtrictions, as the nature of the thing ſuggeſts; that we may uſe them, as things that are not to laſt always; and in which we ought not to acquieſce, as able to yield full and ſolid ſatisfaction. For if they be valued in this immoderate manner, our diſappointment *may* very quickly appear; either by our loſs of them, or by ſome other accident, to imbitter the reliſh and ſpoil, the ſatisfaction that is look'd for in them: but at leaſt it *muſt* appear in the end; when we ſhall ourſelves be taken from them, and no longer have ſo much as the poſſeſſion.

When ſtruggling with the violence of a Diſtemper, and lying in the Agonies of Death; what eaſe or mitigation ſhall we find, from all the Splendor of an ample Fortune, acquired by the care and fatigue of many Years? Much more, when our bodies are conſuming in the Grave, reduced to the inſenſible State of unenliven'd Matter, the prey of Worms, and the ſubject of Corruption? Where will then be our reliſh of thoſe Delights and Gaieties, which were uſed to be purſued, with ſuch eagerneſs of Appetite? Nay, let it be added, that it is very probable, that the Soul may receive ſuch Affections from this immoderate Attachment, as will continue greatly to moleſt and diſcompoſe it, in another State, wherein it will be impoſſible to gratify them. For how ſhould we imagine, that all thoſe Appetites and Deſires will

will be immediately laid aſide, as ſoon as thoſe corporal Organs are demoliſh'd, through which they were excited? So that by too eager a purſuit of theſe Enjoyments; we ſhall not only conſume ourſelves in vain, for that which neither can ſatisfy, nor be retain'd; but we ſhall be farther inſtrumental, to perpetuate in ourſelves a principle of Miſery, and fix a vehement inclination to That, from which we muſt be ſeparated. Again, SERM. VIII.

2. *Secondly*, having learnt to diſengage ourſelves from the Vanities of Life, we ſhould be taught moreover, to look out for true and more ſubſtantial Riches. For though theſe things can no longer be enjoy'd, after the preſent Life; yet the Soul being made for immortality, will be capable of ſome Enjoyments in its ſeparate State: and being reſerv'd for a future Union with the body, in an incorruptible and immortal Condition; ſomething there muſt be, which is capable of yielding real ſatisfaction, throughout all Eternity. Now *ſuch* is the Reward, which the Chriſtian Religion propoſes and commends to us; the Enjoyment of that Satisfaction and Delight, which flows from the inexhauſtible fulneſs of the Divine Preſence; and the conforming of ourſelves to the Divine Image and Likeneſs, in ſuch meaſure and proportion, as the condition of our nature admits.

The ſupreme Author of our Being, and of all Things that exiſt, being moſt excellent in his

SERM. VIII. his own Nature, cannot but be an unmeasurable Source of Bliss and Happiness. As he has all Things in his Power, and disposes of Nature according to his own Will; he is able to defend us from all Evil, and supply us with all that is good and beneficial. As he is eternal, and unchangeable in his own Nature, he is such a Protector, as can never fail us; but will continue, throughout endless Ages, a perpetual and unexhausted Principle of Happiness and Glory. The enjoyments, which are sought in him, and sought by his Direction and Encouragement, must needs be both satisfactory and durable; commensurate to our Desires, and commensurate to our Being. Therefore they are represented, in Scripture, to be such Possessions, as cannot be worn out by the injuries of Time, nor lost by Misfortune, nor torn away by Violence; to be Treasures laid up in Heaven, *where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, nor thieves break thro' and steal.---an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* For such inestimable Treasures, it will be wisely done, to employ all our Diligence; and with the Merchant in the Gospel, to part with every thing else, rather than miss the Opportunity, of securing this *one Pearl of great Price.*

An intelligent Being, that must subsist for ever, will make but an ill bargain; if to gain the gratification of a few moments, it shall barter away its Prospect of everlasting Felicity;

ty; and give up the Soul itſelf, in exchange for thoſe corporal Delights, which the generations, that are paſt, have already left behind them; and we ere long muſt leave, to thoſe that ſhall come after us. SERM. VIII.

3. *Thirdly*, theſe ſame Conſiderations, of the ſhort time of our continuance here, and the Eternity of that Condition, which we are to provide for; ſhould inſtruct us, to uſe great Care and Circumſpection, that our time be well huſbanded, and improved to the beſt Purpoſes. We ſee how one Generation has gone after another; how the Hours and the Years ſlide ſwiftly by us, which ſhould induce us, to beſtir ourſelves in time; that whilſt our buſineſs appears to be ſo great and ſo important, and ſo little time is allow'd us for diſpatching it; we may be careful to lay hold on the preſent Opportunity, and work, while it is call'd to day; as conſidering, that the night cometh, when no Man can work. If any conſiderable advantage were propoſed, to laſt for term of Life, and we had but a few Hours allow'd us to look after and ſecure it; much more, if by neglecting That Opportunity, we had no other Proſpect, but to paſs our whole Lives in Diſtreſs and Miſery; ſhould we not think it a matter of the laſt Importance, not to let thoſe critical Minutes ſlip by us unobſerved, nor ſpend that time in ſupine Indolence and Folly, upon which the Happineſs and quiet of all the reſt of our Life is

SERM. VIII. ſuppoſed to depend? And yet what is the proportion, between making proviſion for this Life, and for Eternity? The one is providing, perhaps, for a few Days, at moſt but for a few Years: whereas the other is providing for that future State, which ſhall never have an End.

The longeſt Life may ſeem but ſhort, to ſecure ſuch important Intereſt: but when the uncertainty of Life is taken into the account, which may be cut off every moment; this ſhould inſtruct us, to improve our time with the greateſt Care and Circumſpection; that as faſt as it flies from us, it may not be loſt and uſeleſs to our main Purpoſe; but every Year, and every Day of our Lives may be ſo employ'd in the fear of God, and in the obedience of Faith, that it may continually ſet us forward in the way to Happineſs, and promote our well-being to all Eternity.

When we thus conſider, how *the time is ſhort*, and *the Faſhion of this World paſſeth* away, with a ſwiftneſs, that cannot poſſibly be ſtaid; and how it is ſucceeded by an endleſs ſtate of Happineſs or Miſery: This ſhould, in all reaſon, excite us to *give* all *diligence to make our calling and election ſure; and to work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling*. Tho' the preſent ſatisfactions of Sin were ſuppoſed to be much more ſolid and ſubſtantial than they are; yet who ſhall pretend to place them in the balance with matters of an infinite duration? And why then

are

are we ſo ſtupid, as to miſpend the little time we have, in the enjoyment and purſuit of Theſe; whilſt we neglect to ſecure ourſelves thoſe true Riches, which would never fail us; and loſe the Opportunity, which perhaps may not be continued any longer to us? Our life itſelf is but *a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.* Mean while, the buſineſs we have to diſpatch in it, is of the laſt Importance and Moment to us; not only for the ſecuring of farther and more ſolid Advantages; but indeed for the avoiding of extremeſt Anguiſh and Uneaſineſs. And what madneſs is it then, to trifle away thoſe precious Minutes, which might be ſo eaſily improved to our eternal Welfare, and abuſe them rather to haſten and increaſe our Damnation? Once more, SERM. VIII.

4. *Fourthly*, let this continual experience, of the Vanity of earthly Goods, and the repeated diſappointment of one Age after another; let it lead us, to admoniſh and inſtruct the growing generation, that they may learn Wiſdom from the failure of the paſt, and give their minds to obſerve thoſe Rules of Religion, which only can conduct them to Felicity.

What can be more natural than for thoſe, who have been long convinc'd of the little ſatisfaction to be found in any thing below, the little certainty of ſucceſs in our Purſuits, and the undoubted certainty of a ſpeedy Separation: I ſay, what can be more natural, than for ſuch

perſons

SERM. VIII. persons to warn those, who are newly coming into Life, that they beware of forming such expectations from these things, as they can no way answer; and of setting their Affections on them in such manner, as must increase the infelicity of Disappointment?

Next to this, it will be fit to raise their minds from Earth to Heaven, and instruct them, that there are Treasures to be sought for, in another Life, which are qualified to fill every desire of a spiritualized and reasonable Being: not tied to Enjoyments, which can neither last nor satisfy, but hid with *Christ* in God; a Being of infinite unchangeable Perfection: So that they must needs be most excellent in their kind, and endless in duration.

And since it has been confirm'd by long experience, that *we have here no continuing city*, but one generation makes haste after another; and as our Years go round, we advance apace towards the time of Dissolution; This furnishes a seasonable matter of Advice for those, who have their Life before them, not to trifle away the time, as many others have done; but to improve the precious minutes to the best Advantage, and make their swift Passage through a vain and troublesome World, instrumental to secure them a glorious and happy Immortality. Thus, the Example of former Ages, would be matter of Instruction for those, that are to come; and the generations that are past, would continue

to

to ſpeak to their Poſterity, when all things are diſcreetly conſider'd and applied by ſage Counſel, and mature Judgment. SERM. VIII.

How does this Reflection lead us, to lament the Infelicity of the preſent Age, in which the Liberties indulg'd to Youth, and the neglect of proper Care and Inſtruction, do preſage a greater degeneracy of Mankind, and endanger the future generations being worſe than the foregoing, by whom they ought to have improved! The grievous neglect of Religion in private Families, the groſs ignorance of Scripture, and of the great Heads of Chriſtian Doctrine, do ſadly prognoſticate our going backwards, and that the *latter end* ſhould be *worſe* with us *than the beginning*.

However, as I truſt there is a time to come, when there will be a Revival, and a great Increaſe of our Religion; when *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea*; it concerns us to take care, that thoſe under our inſpection be furniſh'd with ſuch proper Notices of Faith and Duty, that they may aſſiſt in reſtoring the decay'd Intereſt of Religion and Virtue; and from being helpful to *turn many to righteouſneſs*, may come to reap the bleſſed Fruit of thoſe Endeavours, to *ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars for ever and ever*.

Now to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, &c.

SER-

SERMON IX.

FASTING *an act of* Repentance, *and the Way to Pardon.*

ISAIAH lviii. 3, 4.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.

SERM. IX.

THE Prophet being, in this Chapter, commission'd to arraign the prevailing Wickedness and Vices of the Age; to reprove and rebuke with all Authority; *(cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins)* has it notwithstanding laid before him, that this their Wickedness was conceal'd under a specious veil of Hypocrisy, and pretended Holiness: *yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching to God.* They

They are not blamed (you may obſerve) for being conſtant and aſſiduous in theſe outward acts of Worſhip. But there could be no excuſe for imagining, that ſuch outward Formalities ſhould be accepted by the Searcher of hearts; whilſt their affections remain'd unmortified as ever; whilſt their minds were influenced by ſuch Pride, or Covetouſneſs, or carnal Luſts, as would often carry them to great Extravagance, and demonſtrate their Worſhip to be nothing elſe but empty Ceremony, and a meer honouring of him with their lips, whilſt their hearts were far from him. It was therefore without reaſon, that they expected the acceptance of their ſolemn Faſts, and complain to find them diſregarded; *Wherefore have we faſted*, ſay they, *and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our ſoul, and thou takeſt no knowledge?* For ſo ſays God in return, *Behold, in the day of your faſt, you find pleaſure, and exact all your labours; Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs.* I ſhall conſider this Paſſage under THREE Views, namely, SERM. IX.

I. As it is an intimation of ſome receiv'd Principles among the *Jews*, which not only gave the handle for this expoſtulation of the Hypocrites before us; but are tacitly allow'd in that Anſwer, God is pleaſed to make them.

SERM. IX. II. As it discovers the insolent temper of these Hypocrites, in thus presuming to expostulate their Services with God, and object their own Deserts, as not sufficiently consider'd or regarded by him. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* And

III. As it points out to them the several defects of their pretended Humiliation, and so implies withal a pertinent Direction, how to order our religious Fasts in such manner, as God chooses and accepts. And

I. FIRST then, this Passage deserves to be consider'd, as a clear intimation of some received Principles among the *Jews*, which not only gave the handle for this Expostulation of the Hypocrites before us; but are tacitly allow'd in that answer, God is pleased to make them. And these, at least, must be the two following.

1. That Fasting, with the other Austerities attending it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humiliation for Sin. And likewise,

2. That it is a likely means, to supplicate the Sinner's Pardon, and procure the Divine Favour towards him for the future.

Both these must be supposed Principles in the present Expostulation, because the complaint of being disregarded, is founded entire-

ly in the exercise of such severities, as were thought to have deserv'd greater respect. And they are both likewise allow'd in the Divine Answer; which neither charges religious Fasting with any impropriety, nor represents the supreme Judge of our actions, as unwilling to accept it: but only upbraids the particular Fasting of these Hypocrites with such signal defects, as shew'd it to be not *really religious*. SERM. IX.

1. *First* then, it is implied on both hands, as a confess'd Principle among the *Jews*, that Fasting, with the other Austerities attending it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humiliation for Sin.

This they might learn from that Prescription, which they found of it in their Law it self, on the great day of expiation, or atonement, which was not only declared to be *a Sabbath of rest*, in which they might do *no work at all*, but in which they were required to *afflict their souls from evening to evening*: and whosoever should prove faulty in this matter, was threatened with an utter excision †.

The design of this Solemnity was to make a general atonement for the Sins of the people *, and as Sorrow and Confession were necessary to attend the Sacrifices upon *that* occasion; so the affliction imposed upon them, must be understood of such outward Severi-

† Lev. xvi. 29, 31, and Chap. xxiii. 29, 32.
* Chap. xvi. 21, 34.

SERM. IX. ties, as were then usual with Mourners, and were properly expressive of their inward Grief. Such were their neglect of decency in Dress; their hanging down their Heads in great confusion of Face; their lying on the ground, or walking with unusual slowness; their tearing their Hair, or their Apparel; their putting on Sackcloth; and spreading Ashes under them: of which, and the like marks of Sorrow, we have instances in Scripture too many to admit, and too obvious to need, enumeration. And tho' the Prophet *Joel*, at first view, may be thought to disapprove them, when he advised to rent their *heart* and not their *garments*; yet it is certain he meant not to exclude the *latter* any otherwise, than as that might happen to thrust out and exclude the *former*, which was first to be regarded. And therefore, but in the verse immediately before, he joins them *both* together, and advises them to turn to God, not only *with all their heart*, but (which would be the genuine result of that) with these outwards Signs or Tokens of it, *with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning* *.

It is natural, indeed, for them, who are really affected with any high degree of sorrow, to shew some sign of it, in the neglect of themselves: it is scarce possible to conceal it in the course of their behaviour. We daily

* Joel ii. 12, 13.

see

ſee how the death of a friend, or ſome con- SERM.
ſiderable loſs in their eſtate, will ſometimes IX.
take men off from their regard to every thing
elſe; and for a time overwhelm or ſwallow
them up with grief. And ſhould they then
be leſs affected by the injury their Soul ſuſ-
tains? Should not their remorſe for Sin, as
much engage their Thoughts? Should it
not humble and lay them low in their own
Reflections; and fill them with ſuch a ſenſe
of their Unworthineſs, as will exert itſelf in
proper acts of ſelf-denial, in the Puniſhment
of themſelves by a voluntary ſuſpenſion of
thoſe Enjoyments, which they are conſcious
they ſo little deſerve.

The different tempers and conſtitutions of
Men, might occaſion ſome variety in their
choice of theſe outward methods of Afflicti-
on. Some, for inſtance, might wear Sack-
cloth, and others might tear their uſual Ap-
parel; one might ſit down to lament him-
ſelf in Aſhes, whilſt another might walk
heavily, and carry ſorrow in his mien. This
man might *waſh* his *couch with tears*, and
bemoan himſelf in ſilence; whilſt That man
was apt to be louder in his mourning, and
utter it in doleful Lamentations. But how-
ever they might differ in theſe leſſer Circum-
ſtances; yet, *Faſting* was an expreſſion in
which all agreed; inſomuch that it is laid
down for a rule among the *Jews*, that

SERM. IX. wherefoever the Scripture ſpeaks of *afflicting the Soul*, this Duty is intended *.

By a man's Soul, it is obſervable, the Scripture means himſelf; and therefore, by his afflicting his Soul, it muſt mean proportionably his afflicting himſelf, or ſuſtaining ſome voluntary Puniſhment in his own perſon.

Now, as there is nothing ſo neceſſary to the preſervation of Life as Food; ſo the ſuſpenſion of that, for any conſiderable time, muſt be the moſt ſignal of thoſe perſonal Afflictions. So our Tranſlators repreſent the *Pſalmiſt* as *chaſtening his Soul with Faſting* †; and *Daniel*, in his Abſtinence, is repreſented by the Angel to have *chaſten'd* himſelf *before* his *God* ‖: As it was likewiſe profeſſedly the end of that Faſt, which was proclaim'd by *Ezra*, that the people might *afflict* themſelves *before* their *God* ‡. Hunger and Thirſt, the immediate effects of Faſting, we cannot want to be inform'd, muſt be irkſome and uneaſy. From hence, they ſerve fitly to remind us, of that ſinfulneſs and pollution of our Nature, from which all our Pain and Miſery proceeds, and quicken our Remorſe by that ſad Conſideration. They likewiſe puniſh our abuſe of *paſt* Enjoyments, by making us perceive the want of *preſent*. They wean our Affections, by degrees, from ſublunary Goods; and by reſiſting the Violence of depraved Appetites and Paſſions, we at laſt bring the body in ſubjection to the mind,

* See Bp. Patrick of Faſting, Chap. 12. † Pſal. lxix. 10.
‖ Dan. x. 12. ‡ Ezra viii. 21.

and

and prevent that Disturbance, which unruly Lusts might give us, in the acts of Prayer and serious Meditation. Lastly, this sense of Necessity in ourselves, will better incline our Sympathy with others, as the paring off from our own common expences, will better enable us to assist them. SERM. IX.

It appears from the Examples already mention'd of *David*, of *Daniel* and of *Ezra*, that tho' there was no more than one general Fast appointed by the Law; yet from thence, as well as from the Reason of the thing, the *Jews* took occasion to observe others as well of a private as a publick nature. Those of *David* and *Daniel*, were their own private acts of Humiliation before God: But that of *Ezra* was observ'd by the whole body of the people; as also that mention'd in the Book of *Esther*, when not only the Queen and her Maidens, but all the *Jews*, that were in *Shushan*, fasted for *three days* successively, *neither eating nor drinking night or day* †.

Nay, we learn from the Prophet *Zechary* ‖, as well as from the modern *Jewish Kalendar*, that there were *four* annual Feasts appointed in the time of the Captivity at *Babylon: one* in the tenth month for *Nebuchadnezzar*'s laying siege to *Jerusalem*; *another* in the fourth month for the destruction of the City; *another* in the fifth for the demolition of the Temple; and a *fourth* in the seventh month, for the murther of *Gedaliah*.

† Esth. iv. 16. ‖ Zech. vii. 5. Chap. viii. 19.

SERM. IX. So likewiſe to that day of Atonement, which was preſcribed, by *Moſes*, they have prefixed, by univerſal cuſtom, certain days of Preparation: that by habituating themſelves to Faſting and Prayer, to Almſgiving and other acts of Penance, they might the better be qualified for the Duties of that great day; and humbled in ſincerity, as well as outward ſhew. To this purpoſe they ſet apart at leaſt the Week before; and ſome among them are ſaid to obſerve no leſs than forty days: and if the reſt do not continue their penitential Devotions thro' that whole ſpace of time; yet the firſt of the forty is at this day univerſally obſerv'd; in memory of thoſe forty days, which *Moſes* ſpent in Faſting and Prayers for the people, at the ſecond time of his aſcent into the Mount *.

Nor have we an account only of theſe *yearly*, but of certain *weekly* Faſts, which were obſerv'd among them. *I faſt twice in the week*, ſaid the vain glorious Phariſee †. Nor was this any thing more, than what was uſual among thoſe of a ſtricter Converſation; The *ſecond* and *fifth* days of every week (which anſwer to our *Monday* and *Thurſday*) being ſet apart for that purpoſe; as alſo for the more ſolemn aſſembling of themſelves together: that ſo, there might no three days

* See Bp. Hooper's Diſcourſe concerning Lent, p. 419, 420. † Luke xviii. 12.

paſs

paſs ſucceſſively without their hearing of the Law in publick *. SERM. IX.

Nay, and ſo proper a concomitant, was this *Faſting* judg'd, of their more ſolemn Devotions, that even on the Sabbath itſelf (as great a *Feſtival* as it was) they are ſaid not to have eaten or drank any thing, before the morning Service was concluded ‡. From all which we may underſtand, what is taught us in the Goſpel, concerning the frequent Faſtings of the Diſciples of St. *John*, and of the *Phariſees* †.

And now, after this account, which has been given of their ſolemn days of Faſting and Humiliation; (as well as of the private practice of the men of more exalted Piety) it may be proper very briefly to explain, with what degrees of Abſtinence they held it neceſſary to obſerve them. And here it is remarkable, that in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, *Faſting* is oppoſed, in Scripture, to *eating and drinking* of any kind whatever ‖. And therefore a proper and compleat Faſt, muſt imply a total Abſtinence for the whole four and twenty hours: as on the day of Expiation we have ſeen they were required to afflict themſelves *from even unto even.*

And thus the Faſt of *Eſther* abovementi-on'd, continued for three days ſucceſſively:

* See Bp. Patrick of Faſting, Chap. 13. ‡ Ibid. Chap. 12. † Mat. ix. 14. Mar. ii. 18. Luk. v. 33. ‖ See Bp. Patrick, Chap. 10, and Bp. Hooper, p. 20, &c.

tho'

SERM. IX. tho' in their ordinary Fasts they allow'd of some Refreshment in the first evening; to qualify them the better to endure 'till the next. But when the time prescribed for Fasting was too long, to admit such total Abstinence; it was then enough, that they abstain'd from fuller Meals, and more delicate Provisions; that they confined themselves to a spare Diet, and a coarser kind of Food; and it may be, took *That* only in the evening, that their longest Fasts might be as strict as possible.

So it seems *Josephus* understood that Fast of *Esther*; and so *Daniel* has clearly explain'd his own: *In those days*, says he, *I was mourning three full weeks; I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled* *. From which Example we may judge of the Nature of those *forty days* Abstinence, which those of the severer Discipline observ'd, as preparatory to the day of Expiation.

Nor was length of time the only exception in this matter. They who by a constant Abstemiousness were mortified already, and had brought their body to a good degree of subjection, would have less occasion for those rigorous Prescriptions, to prepare them for the Duty of such Solemnities. And they, whose weakly Constitution, and low habit of body, required more regular supplies of Food, were,

* Dan. x. 2, 3.

no

no doubt, to be excuſed a total Abſtinence; provided they took care to be very ſparing and temperate, and abſtain from ſuch things, as might miniſter to Luxury, either to pamper the body, or indulge the taſte. We know who has told us, that he will have *mercy and not ſacrifice:* and ſince the Duty we are now conſidering is chiefly intended to be inſtrumental to ſome higher end; ſince it is the principal deſign of Faſting, to fit men for the Exercise of holy Duties; it ſeems from hence to be a neceſſary conſequence, that whenever Faſting is ſo far from having this effect, that it rather makes men grow ſick and languiſh, and ſo really diſqualifies them for the Duties propoſed, their Obligation to it muſt ceaſe in proportion, as its uſefulneſs is leſſen'd; and they ought not to uſe That under the notion of a furtherance, which is truly an impediment. But from the lower degrees of Abſtinence, ſcarce any pretence of Conſtitution could excuſe them: nor could they, by any means, be reckon'd to anſwer the religious purpoſes of Faſting; unleſs they laid ſuch a check and reſtraint upon their Appetite, as might in ſome meaſure *afflict* them, and bring their body into ſome tolerable degree of ſubjection to the mind. SERM. IX.

And thus far of the *firſt* of thoſe Points, which is implied in the Text, as a receiv'd Principle among the *Jews*; namely, that Faſting, with the other Auſterities attending it,

SERM. IX. it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humiliation for Sin. It is farther supposed,

2. *Secondly*, That the same is a likely means to supplicate the Sinner's Pardon; and procure the Divine Favour towards him for the future.

Thus much indeed must follow, from what was said before, of the end or purpose of religious Fasting. For if it expresses so high a detestation of Sin, in a voluntary Punishment and Revenge upon ourselves; if it demonstrates a thorough conviction of our own unworthiness, to enjoy the good Creatures of that glorious Majesty, we so ungratefully offend; if it sets forth our charitable concern and grief of mind, for the Offences of others, who mourn not for themselves; if moreover, it helps to mortify our corrupt Affections, and brings us to such a meek and humble frame of Spirit, as may become the state of Supplicants; there is great ground to hope, that such pious dispositions will be graciously accepted by our most merciful Creator; and that the outward acts, which both spring from, and promote them, will therefore be accepted upon their account.

This, we find, has been the general opinion of all Nations; and therefore the Heathen *Ninevites* themselves thought there could be no likelier way to appease the wrath of God, and avert his impending Judgments, than the solemn observation of a general Fast, and

Humiliation of themſelves in Sackcloth and Aſhes. The Profeſſors of the true Religion have gone upon yet better grounds; as having *a more ſure word of prophecy* to certify them, that *the ſacrifices of God are a broken ſpirit:* and whatever may become of the wilful and impenitent; yet *a broken and a contrite heart he will* be ſure *not* to *deſpiſe:* that therefore, if our Faſt be made a day of real and ſincere Humiliation; there can be no doubt of its being, what the Prophet moſt emphatically ſtiles it, *an acceptable day to the Lord.* His appointment of one ſolemn yearly Faſt among the *Jews*, and annexing a promiſe of Pardon and Forgiveneſs to it, was a ſufficient declaration, how he approved the method, and encouraged the People to obſerve *others*, after the Example of *This.* SERM. IX.

Moreover it appears from many inſtances, how the Penitents in fact have been accepted, their Prayers regarded, and their Sins forgiven them upon ſuch Humiliation; and if for ſecret ends of Providence, it be not always expedient to avert thoſe temporal Judgments, which ſuch Sins may have occaſion'd; yet this muſt be acknowledg'd the moſt probable method, we can take for that purpoſe: and therefore, it is one motive, which the Prophet *Joel* urges to Faſting and Weeping and ſincere Contrition; *Who knoweth if he will turn and repent, and leave a bleſſing behind him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering, unto the Lord*

SERM. IX. *Lord your God* *? *The Ninevites* already mention'd are a memorable inſtance of this kind; who, tho' threatned with an utter deſtruction, within forty days, yet obtain'd the Favour to have this Sentence reverſed, and their Judgment reſpited for many years, upon their general Repentance, and Humiliation of themſelves before God. Nay, ſometimes this effect has follow'd from deep Sorrow and Remorſe; even where it had not influence enough to produce a real Reformation and Amendment of Life. For ſo we read of *Ahab* himſelf, when *he rent his clothes and put ſackcloth upon his fleſh, and faſted, and lay in ſackcloth, and went ſoftly*; we read that *the word of the Lord came to Elijah, ſaying, Seeſt thou how Ahab humbleth himſelf before me? becauſe he humbleth himſelf before me, I will not bring the evil in his days* †.

We have hitherto ſeen the opinion, and practice of the *Jews*; and far be it from us to ſuppoſe them overthrown, by any rule of *Chriſtianity*. The Diſciples, it is true, of *Jeſus*, were cenſured by thoſe of *John* ‡, for not addicting themſelves to the ſame frequent Faſtings, which were uſual with the men of ſtricter diſcipline. But in what manner did their Maſter vindicate their conduct? Not by inſiſting, that this piece of *Jewiſh* Diſcipline was to be utterly aboliſhed; but that *that*

* Joel ii. 14. † 1 Kings xxi. 27, &c. ‡ Mat. ix. 14, 15.

was

was not the proper ſeaſon for ſuch ſeverities; that the time of his preſence was a time of Joy and Exultation, in which the frequent exerciſe of Faſting would be equally abſurd, as at a nuptial Entertainment: but that after his departure ſhould ſucceed a time of Mourning and Humiliation, in which it would be their Duty to revive the antient Diſcipline, and afflict themſelves as formerly, with frequent acts of ſelf-denial. *Can the children of the Bride-chamber mourn*, ſays he, *as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the Bridegroom ſhall be taken from them, and then ſhall they faſt* *. SERM. IX.

Accordingly in his Sermon on the Mount, our Lord has given Rules for Faſting, to avoid the vain-glorious Shew and Oſtentation of the Hypocrites; and in humble Sincerity to lay open our Grief before our Father, who *ſeeth in ſecret*, and *will reward us openly*. St. *Paul*, in Obedience to this great Direction, acquaints us, how he was *in faſtings often* †; for this very End, that he might *keep under his body, and bring it into ſubjection* ‡. And St. *James* lays it down as a general Rule for *Chriſtian* Practice, to *be afflicted* (which from the ſtyle of the *old Teſtament* appears to intend *faſting*) *and* to *mourn and weep*, to *turn* our *laughter to mourning*, and our *joy to heavineſs*; to *humble our ſelves in the ſight of the Lord*, that he may *lift us up* ||.

* Mat. ix. 15. † 2 Cor. xi. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27. || Jam. iv. 9, 10.

The

SERM. IX.

The Christian Church did, in its primitive State, conform itself to such Precepts and Examples. The weekly Fasts of *Wednesday* and *Friday* were substituted in the Room of the *Mondays* and *Thursdays* of the *Jews**: and the last was plainly intended, in Commemoration of our Saviour's Passion, to which, for the like reason, some Churches added the Day following; in which he continued in a State of Death, and applied to that purpose those words of our Saviour, that his Disciples should fast in those days, when the Bridegroom should be separated from them. *The days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast.*

But tho' these were not neglected by the Men of stricter Piety and Devotion; yet much more solemn was the yearly Commemoration of our Saviour's Crucifixion; That true Christian Atonement for the Sins of the whole World, which succeeded to the typical Expiation of the *Jews*; and like that, was thought necessary to be introduced by such a preparatory Season of Penance and Devotion, as whilst it purified its diligent Observers from the Power and Pollution of their Sins, might make them fit Subjects of that holy Joy, with which it would become them to celebrate the approaching Festival of Easter †.

* Bp. Patrick. chap. 13. Bp. Hooper. p. 46, &c. † Ibid. p. 418, &c.

The

The number of days appointed for this purpose was extremely various: and whilſt ſome began their Devotions in the Holy Week, there were others ſpent no leſs than forty days in preparation; from whence the ſeaſon of LENT took its Name of *Quadrageſima**. SERM. IX.

Our Church in this has tranſcribed after the primitive Pattern; and beſides *the Vigils* or *Evens* before certain *Feſtivals*, has appointed *the forty days of Lent*, and all the *Fridays* in the year, except *Chriſtmas day*, beſides the additional Solemnities of the *Rogation* and *Ember Seaſons*, to be obſerved as days of Faſting or Abſtinence. In this indeed appears her Wiſdom and her Moderation; that ſhe has no where preſcribed any certain Rules of Abſtinence: but left That as a matter of Diſcretion; out of a juſt regard to our various Conſtitutions, and the exigence of our Affairs reſpectively. She only expects, that we ſhould take ſuch occaſions to afflict and humble our ſelves before God; as well by the ſparingneſs and coarſeneſs of our Diet, as by imparting to the Neceſſities of other people, what we ſave from our ſelves; in order to ſubdue our carnal and worldly Affections, and prepare us with more fervent Devotion, to bewail our own Sins, and thoſe of other people; to ſupplicate the Favour of God, and to avert his Judgments; and to procure his gracious aid for the diſcharge

* Patrick. Chap. 16.

SERM. IX. of better Obedience in the time to come. She judges it expedient to have ſtated days appointed for that purpoſe; becauſe the generality of men would be apt to neglect theſe neceſſary Duties, if not invited and reminded of them, by the regular return of ſuch Solemnities. But ſhe does not ſo rigorouſly preſcribe the Method of obſerving them; but that they, who are unable to faſt all day from Food, may be excuſed, for their Abſtinence from fuller Meals, as well as from the more luſcious and pampering Proviſions: provided they improve this Affliction of their Bodies, to the real Benefit and Advantage of their Souls.

But in what manner, ſhall I venture to purſue ſo unpopular an Argument? Shall I preſs upon you, the obſervation of theſe Faſts, which are grown almoſt obſolete thro' a general neglect? Or ſhall I ſay, that theſe Preſcriptions of the Church are in themſelves unneceſſary, and therefore need not be regarded? Alas! I can have little hope, that any thing, which I ſhould offer, might help to the reviving of ſo pious and primitive a Practice: But yet, this is undoubtedly required by the ſtanding Rules of our Church; and let it be as much out of Faſhion as it will, the Obligation, which we ſtand in to them, cannot but be matter of Weight and Importance.

'Tis true, as the fixing of the Time is a matter of meer Diſcipline and outward Form; great allowances there may be made for the neceſ-

neceſſities of Buſineſs, and other occaſional Indiſpoſitions. But be ſure, it is a fault to let Buſineſs or Pleaſure ſwallow up all our time, without allotting any portion of it to ſuch religious Humiliations. If we have not leiſure to obſerve the conſtant return of theſe Solemnities; yet at leaſt let ſome of them be ſet apart, to enquire into the ſtate of our Souls, in order to bewail and correct all Imperfections, and preſerve that Reliſh of Religion, which may qualify and prepare us for eternal Joys. Let the approaching *Seaſon of Lent* more particularly be improved, to ſuch good and beneficial Purpoſes; and let the inward Grief and Humiliation of our Souls expreſs it ſelf in Faſting, and ſuch *bodily exerciſes*, as will be of ſome Profit to us; altho' it be but little, in compariſon of that real Sorrow and Remorſe, which it is meant to expreſs. SERM. IX.

Place not then your Faſting, in meer abſtinence from Fleſh; whilſt you pamper your Body, or indulge your Taſte with variety of other Dainties. But let the faſting of your Body be fitly ſuited to the affliction of your Soul; let it be an act of real Mortification and Self-denial; let it be ſuch as may prepare you for the Devotions of the Seaſon, and enable you the better to beſtow ſuch Alms, as are proper to be joined with them.

If your affairs will not allow you to be ſo exact in obſerving the whole time of *Lent*, let it be your care, at leaſt, to have certain

SERM. IX. Portions of it set apart for the exercise of these Duties. Let the day of our Saviour's Passion be observed with all the strictness, that our Constitutions may bear; and not spent (as I fear it is too commonly) in eating and drinking, and other acts of common Business; a thing (says the late excellent *Bishop Patrick)* never heard of in the Church of *Christ* till these latter days*; and which therefore, among other Scandals, affords us matter of the justest lamentation. Let the whole Week in which it falls, be regarded as a time of uncommon and strict Humiliation.

Let the *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* through the whole Season, as being the more solemn days of Prayer, be observed with such Retirement and Abstinence as may assist our Devotion. And if our affairs allow it, let the other days of *Lent* (excepting the *Sundays*, which are always festival) be generally improved by such mortifying Exercises; or at the very least by abstaining from the more airy and jovial Diversions.

What use this Practice might be of to men of the more gross and more aggravated wickedness, what need they have to lament their Impiety with floods of Tears, to break off their evil Habits by more frequent and rigorous Severities, and to punish themselves with a stricter denial of the Benefits they have

* Ut supra Chap. 18.

abused,

abuſed, is obvious at the firſt mention; and will, no doubt, be fully juſtified, whenever they ſhall in earneſt venture upon making the Experiment. And if they, who have been uſed to walk in the ways of Virtue and Religion, have reaſon to *rejoice in the Lord alway*; upon the ſenſe they have of their *peace with God, thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; yet it lies upon Them to bewail the publick Sins and Offences of the people; for ſo the Apoſtle inſtructed his *Corinthians*, that they *ought to have mourned* over the inceſtuous Perſon*; and expected for his own part, *to be humbled* among them, in order to *bewail many, which had ſinned and had not repented*†. And ſuch, no doubt, was the deſign of publick Penance, uſual at this Seaſon; that the Sinner might receive the benefit of the publick Faſtings and Prayers of the Church. And if thro' the iniquity of the times, this piece of ancient Diſcipline is now become impracticable; yet let us not be wanting to ſupply, as we are able, the defect, by heartily lamenting that Infidelity and Atheiſm, that Vice and Immorality, that Hereſie and Diviſion, that Strife and Envying, which is gone out among us, and calls for the heavieſt of the Divine Judgments; even for the removal of our Candleſtick, and the extinction of that Light, which is ſo wretchedly abuſed.

SERM. IX.

* 1 Cor. v. 2. † 2 Cor. xii. 21.

SERM. IX. Nay, and let me add, that *all* have Corruptions of their own, which call for no small degree of Humiliation and Concern; which the better men they are, the more they will perceive, the more they will afflict themselves at the Conviction of it: the more earnestly will they labour to suppress and conquer them; and pray to that *Jesus*, "who for our sakes "did fast forty days and forty nights," that he would give them "grace to use such ab- "stinence, that the flesh being subdued to "the spirit, they may ever obey his godly "motions in righteousness and true holiness, "to his honour and glory, who liveth and "reigneth with the Father and the Holy "Ghost, one God, world without end, "Amen *.

* Collect for the 1 Sunday in Lent.

SER-

SERMON X.

Hypocritical Faſting *expoſed, and* religious *recommended.*

ISAIAH lviii. 3, 4.

Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our ſoul, and thou takeſt no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your faſt you find pleaſure, and exact all your labours.

Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs.

THIS remarkable Paſſage I propoſed to conſider under THREE views, namely, SERM. X.

I. As it is an intimation of ſome received Principles among the *Jews*, which not only gave the handle for this Expoſtulation of the Hypocrites before us, but are tacitly allowed in that anſwer God is pleaſed to make them.

II. As it diſcovers the inſolent temper of theſe Hypocrites, in thus preſuming to expoſtulate their ſervices with God, and object their own deſerts, as not ſufficiently conſidered or regarded by him. And

SERM. X. III. As it points out to them the several defects of their pretended Humiliation, and so implies withal, a pertinent direction how to order our religious Fasts, in such manner as God chooses and accepts.

I. And FIRST, as it is an intimation of some received Principles among the *Jews*; I took notice that there are manifestly *two* observable from this Passage, namely,

1. That Fasting, with the other Austerities attending it, is a proper act of Repentance and Humiliation for Sin. And likewise,

2. That it is a likely means to supplicate the Sinner's Pardon, and procure the Divine Favour towards him for the future.

To this purpose I briefly laid before you the *Jewish* Practice of Fasting, and other acts of Humiliation, prescribed only in one instance in the Law of *Moses*; but from thence drawn out into many others, both publick and private, annual and weekly. The Nature of the thing, its Institution in the Law, and the numerous Examples of the actual Efficacy and Success of it, are all undoubted Testimonies of its acceptableness with God; as the Practice of the *Jews* was, of their firm expectation that it should be so accepted.

Nor is it to be looked on as a piece of *Jewish* Superstition, abolished with the Rites and Ceremonies of the old Law, and repugnant therefore to the glorious Liberty and Freedom

dom of the Gospel. For as it is a Practice founded in the Reason of things, and flowing indeed from Principles of Nature; so we find it recommended among the Precepts of our great Master; continued afterwards by his Apostles; and by the whole Church of Christ after their Example: from whence we come to have days appointed for that purpose in *the Church of England;* more particularly the solemn Season of *Lent:* which succeeds the yearly Fast of Expiation among the *Jews*; and the foregoing days, which were preparatory to it. SERM. X.

And however the observation of this Season may now be grown unfashionable, (when from unreasonable fears of Popery, we are apt to run into the contrary extreams) yet some Portions of it ought certainly to be set apart, for the stricter enquiry into the state of our Souls; the deeper Humiliation of ourselves before God; the breaking off our evil Habits; and rising to such newness of Life, as may fitly qualify us to celebrate the succeeding Festival of our Saviour's Resurrection. Nor should this Grief be kept entirely within; but express itself, if not in compleat Fasting from all Food for some considerable time; yet at least in such Abstinence from the more plentiful and delicate Provisions, as may signify the sense we have of our unworthiness, of the Mercies we enjoy, and so help us to subdue all carnal and worldly Affections; that we

SERM. X. we may be qualified, with higher degrees of Sincerity and Zeal, to join in the Devotions of this holy Seaſon.

Such was the Subject of my laſt Diſcourſe; wherein I diſpatched the FIRST view of the Text. I proceed now, in order to conſider it,

II. SECONDLY, as it diſcovers the inſolent temper of theſe Hypocrites, in thus preſuming to expoſtulate their Services with God, and object their own Deſerts as not ſufficiently conſider'd or regarded by him. *Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our ſoul, and thou takeſt no knowledge?* In this Expoſtulation we may fairly take notice of their Preſumption, Impatience, and Infidelity.

1. *Firſt*, their *Preſumption* is obſervable in this Expoſtulation, in arrogating ſuch pretence of merit to themſelves; as if their ſervices had right to demand returns of the Divine Favour, and lay claim to a reward as tho' it were a matter of debt. Had their Repentance been ever ſo ſincere and fruitful of good Works, it had ill become them to inſiſt upon its worthineſs, or plead their title from it to the Rewards of Providence. For what had they done in this, more than was their Duty, and by various ties and obligations bound upon them? Could they reckon themſelves any way *profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf?* Could

Could they think their obedience any addition to his Happineſs, or expect he ſhould find any Advantage in it; altho' they had been able to have reach'd the utmoſt Perfection? They ſhould rather have remember'd, that whilſt they lay low on the earth, precarious in their Being, fallible in the contrivance of their Projects, and impotent in the execution; the God, with whom they uſed ſuch freedom, ſat high upon his Throne in Heaven, *exalted far above all bleſſing and praiſe*, thro' his Omniſcience beholding, by his Omnipotence diſpoſing of all things in the Univerſe; neither wanting the aſſiſtance of his frail creatures, nor liable to any injuries by their tranſgreſſion. In all this there can be no foundation for a claim of Merit in the moſt perfect Services; and if God has been pleaſed to annex moſt gracious Promiſes of Reward to our Obedience; yet That is an act of his own Bounty and Goodneſs; and it muſt be an argument of great Preſumption and Ingratitude to ſpeak of the effect of his free Mercy as a right of our own. It is indeed an argument of ſuch Preſumption, as is utterly inconſiſtent with true Penitence and Contrition of Soul. SERM. X.

For ſuppoſe a man truly humbled under the ſenſe of his Sins, and with great confuſion of face lamenting his unworthineſs; and can it be imagin'd ſuch a one as this ſhould ever think of Merit in his Services, or lay

SERM. X. claim to *greater* Blessings, as a matter of Right; whilst he acknowledges himself unworthy of the *least?* He knows the imperfection of his best Performances; and that whatever there may be in them, which is good and commendable, proceeds not from himself; but from the gracious Assistance of his heavenly Father, who worketh in him *both to will and to do*. And tho' he may humbly hope for the acceptance of such Humiliation; because He has promised to accept it, who cannot deceive him; yet will he only expect and receive it as a Favour, and not claim it as a Debt: he will only expect it with the utmost Resignation, as conscious to himself of numberless Defects; that he has been punish'd less than his Iniquities deserve, and able therefore to vindicate the Justice of his Maker, in all that shall be brought upon him. Finally, he knows that temporal Adversity is oftentimes subservient to many wise Ends and purposes of Providence: and therefore he reckons it no certain proof, that his Humiliation is rejected; if the rod of outward Affliction should never be removed: from whence he has hope, even in death itself; and resolves with holy *Job*, that tho' God *should slay him, yet would he trust in him.*

How different from this, was the behaviour of the Hypocrites before us! How little Sincerity could there be in their Humiliation, which left them possess'd of so much Pride

and Preſumption, ſo high an opinion and va- SERM.
lue for their own Services! Accordingly, we X.
find, their Faſts were charged with very
ſignal defects; and from this Expoſtulation
it ſelf, it is obvious to take notice,

2. *Secondly* of their *Impatience.* It was obſerv'd before, that many wiſe Ends of Providence are ſometimes ſerv'd, by the withholding of temporal advantages. The Obſervation will be yet clearer; if we ſuppoſe only a ſhort ſuſpenſion, and that God does but for a time forbear the granting of thoſe Benefits, which he will not finally deny. The argument from hence is obvious, that we ſhould patiently wait till God's appointed time, and not take occaſion of complaint or murmuring, becauſe our expectations are not ſatisfied immediately, nor the Divine Favour extended to us, exactly in that manner we propoſe to ourſelves.

Such inſolent behaviour indeed can ariſe from nothing elſe, but the ſame *Preſumption*, which was mention'd before: whilſt the man, who is truly mortified under the ſenſe of his Sins, will no more dare to ſet a time for God's beſtowing his Favours, than preſume he has deſerv'd any; but truſt wholly to his Goodneſs, both for the one and the other; and commit himſelf into the hands of God, *as unto a faithful Creator.* It may poſſibly be the very End, why God delays his Favour; to give occaſion for the exerciſe of this Virtue

of

SERM. X. of Patience, to raise us to greater fervency in our Devotions; and teach us by manifold repulses to wait upon him in humility of Soul, and look upon That, as the most proper season for our relief and rescue; not when we are pleased to ask it; but when he shall see fit to grant our request.

Till thus *the trying of our Faith*, has wrought in us this effect of *Patience*; and till this *Patience* has had *her perfect work*, (under some proper allowances for the infirmities of human Nature) there is just ground to conclude, we are not duly humbled, our exorbitant affections are not mortified within us: and no wonder then, if God suspend the Favours, for which we are not qualified; till by our humble submission to his Will, we shall have given better proof of our Amendment, and testified the sincerity of our Humiliation, by continuing therein with all Perseverance.

Here then is manifest occasion for suspicion, that the boasted Fasting of those mentioned in the Text was vain and hypocritical; and were we not more expressly assured of their villany; yet this impatient murmuring would be enough to convince us, that they were not yet brought to that Humility of Soul, from which alone they could have ground to hope for any acceptance of their outward Services. Once more,

3. *Thirdly*, to their Presumption and Impatience, we may add their *Infidelity*. Next to

to our belief of the Being of a GOD, it is ne- SERM.
ceſſary, in order to found a rational Worſhip X.
of him, that we ſhould believe him to be
a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.
In this, we ſhall confeſs his Wiſdom, to diſcern our wants; and his Power, to ſupply them; but above all, his Goodneſs, to reach out ſuch Supplies, as ſhall upon all accounts be moſt fitting and convenient. Without the belief of all theſe Attributes together, we could never addreſs ourſelves to him, but with much doubt and diffidence. But when once we are firmly perſuaded and convinc'd of Them, we approach *with boldneſs to the throne of grace*; and are ſo far from murmuring, when the Event ſucceeds not according to our expectations; that we impute it only to our own ignorance, who are not able to fathom the deſigns of Providence, nor look into the iſſue of the whole matter; which would abundantly vindicate theſe preſent diſtributions of Him, who *ſeeth not as man ſeeth.*

It muſt be therefore from *an evil heart of unbelief*, that the oppoſite murmurings and complaints ariſe; either from a ſuſpicion, that our groanings may be hid from him; or from ſome apprehenſion, that *his hand* may be *ſhorten'd that it cannot ſave* us from our trouble; or laſtly, from a diſtruſt of his Goodneſs, that he has no inclination to exert his Power to ſuccour and relieve us. Such, doubtleſs, was the caſe of theſe murmurers in the Text,

who,

SERM. X. who, however they might know God, or have sufficient notices made to them of his Being and Attributes; yet *glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darken'd.* Immediately they impeach'd his Justice or his Goodness; if he fail'd of answering their presumptuous expectations. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* Which was in them the more absurd and monstrous; because this Fasting and Affliction, they boasted of so much, was nothing else, after all, but meer formality and outward shew: whilst their ordinary practice still continued as exorbitant, and their inward affections unmortified as ever. Which leads me in order to the

III. THIRD view, in which this passage was proposed to be consider'd; namely, as it points out to these Hypocrites the several defects of their pretended Humiliation; and so implies withal a pertinent direction how to order our religious Fasts in such manner, as God chooses and accepts. *Behold in the day of your Fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.* In which words their pretended Humiliations are upbraided, with those very Lusts and evil Dispositions; the subduing whereof ought to have been their principal Design: namely,

1. Sensual

1. Senſual and unmortified Affections: *Behold in the day of your faſt, you find pleaſure.* SERM. X.

2. Covetouſneſs and Oppreſſion, which ariſe from worldly Affections: *and exact all your labours.* And,

3. Uncharitableneſs, and a contentious Spirit: *Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs.*

1. *Firſt,* I begin with the firſt of theſe defects, charged upon their pretended Humiliation; namely, the continuance of ſenſual and unmortified Affections: *Behold, in the day of your faſt, you find pleaſure.* If by *the day of their faſt,* we underſtand ſtrictly the very day appropriated to ſuch Humiliation; then this paſſage upbraids them with a partial or counterfeit Affliction of themſelves, that it had nothing in it truly mortifying, but only in appearance: or at leaſt, that if they deny'd themſelves in one reſpect, they indulg'd in another; and contriv'd ſome way to gratify their Appetite for ſenſual Pleaſure. They utter'd themſelves indeed in doleful Lamentations, and made their *voices to be heard on high.* They might uſe that Faſting, which would commonly paſs for the Affliction of the Soul. *They might bow down their heads as bulruſhes, and ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under them.* But all this, perhaps, was only matter of their publick behaviour, put on for Form and Oſtentation; whilſt they took the opportunity, in ſecret, to purſue their

SERM. X. wonted pleasures: and if not to indulge themselves at rich Collations; yet to steal, at least, such Diversions and Amusements, as should destroy the very End of fasting; and prevent that inward sorrow and compunction required upon such occasions.

Again, *the day of their fast* may be explain'd of the evening immediately succeeding it; that tho' they might endure the severities of the *day*; yet they made splendid preparations to entertain themselves at *night:* that their present Fasting serv'd only to whet their appetite for more delicious Banquets; and the other severities which they endured gave them but the greater gust for vain and sensual satisfactions: that however in the morning, they might appear to afflict themselves with *weeping* and with *mourning*, with *baldness*, *and girding with sackcloth*; yet in the evening *behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine*, according to the *Epicure*'s maxim, *let us eat and drink*; *for to morrow we shall die* *.

And who then can imagine, such extravagant deportment should consist with true Mortification? For tho' no Fast can be design'd for a perpetual Abstinence from those satisfactions, which the bounty of Providence allows us richly to enjoy; yet a greedy return to them, as soon as ever the minutes appointed for such Abstinence expire, must argue

* Isai. xxii. 12, 13.

that

that Sorrow to have ſunk but little way, which is ſo eaſily removed: eſpecially if they indulge themſelves in them to any enormous exceſſes; as if they meant to make up for the time which had been loſt, and compenſate for the rigorous Hardſhips of the *day*, by the licentious Revels of the *night*. SERM. X.

Laſtly, *the day of their faſt* may be taken yet more generally for that part, or time of their Life, in which they had taken up theſe pretences of Amendment, by mortifying and humbling themſelves before their God. And if ſo, then the pleaſures, with which they are upbraided, muſt mean either vicious and unlawful pleaſures; or lawful ones at leaſt purſued to an exorbitant degree. And then, it muſt be the purport of this reprehenſion, that however they might appear humbled and demure for a time; yet That frame of countenance, and manner of behaviour, was put on only for the preſent occaſion; whilſt at other times they would be as extravagant in their conduct, and as looſe in their morals, as the moſt abandon'd and licentious.

Whichever way you take it, it comes much to the ſame, as to the matter before us; that their mortification was but feign'd and hypocritical; that there was no change in their affections, whatever there might be in their appearance; that they were guilty of the ſame crime which the Prophet *Zechary* objects to his cotemporaries, that they had

SERM. X. not *faſted to the Lord*; but were ſtill as much ſway'd by the dictates of Senſe and carnal Appetite, as they had been before thoſe Judgments were inflicted, for which they now pretended to humble and afflict themſelves.

From this Example we perceive, that our Humiliations muſt be made without Partiality and fond Reſerves; that we ſhould not only abſtain from Delicacies in our food, but from the more gay and jovial Diverſions; from Plays and Paſtimes, and unneceſſary Viſits; from every thing, which may imply ſuch lightneſs in our minds, as is wholly incompatible with our ſolemn profeſſions of Sorrow and Contrition. Much leſs ſhould we place our Faſting (as ſome Zealots do) in an Abſtinence only from one kind of food, whilſt we even feaſt ourſelves to Luxury with others; or in the omiſſion of a ſingle Meal, whilſt we intend to eat double at the next, and conclude our *Faſt* with the appearance of a *Feſtival*.

And if ſuch care there muſt be taken, of theſe outward expreſſions of our Grief and Concern; much more, no doubt, is it required that *that* Concern be real; that we reſt not in meer Appearances and Forms; that we be inwardly affected with that *Godly ſorrow*, which may work *Repentance unto life*; which may prevent our returning any more to folly, to thoſe vain and ſinful pleaſures, which we now profeſs to deteſt, and therefore muſt be underſtood to promiſe we will purſue no more.

2. *Secondly*,

SERM. X.

2. *Secondly*, Theſe Hypocrites, notwithſtanding all their faſting, are upbraided with worldly, as well as carnal Affections; with Oppreſſion and Avarice, with want of Mercy and Compaſſion towards others. *In the day of their faſt* they did not only *find pleaſure*, but *exacted all their labours.*

The original word, which we tranſlate *labours*, is uſed by a figure, to denote thoſe riches which are gotten by the toil and fatigue either of ourſelves or others. For ſo it is explain'd clearly, in the Book of *Proverbs*;—*leſt ſtrangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy* LABOURS *be in the houſe of ſtrangers* *. Whereby a man's having his *labours* in another's houſe, muſt be meant, the waſting of his ſubſtance, and transferring it into the hands of others.

And proportionably by exacting his labours, in the ſtyle of the *Moſaick* Law, muſt be meant his rigorous inſiſting upon payment, where the debtor had not ability to make it. For ſo the notion of exaction is ſtated in the Law of the ſabbatick year. *At the end of every ſeven years, thou ſhalt make a releaſe. And this is the manner of the releaſe: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour ſhall releaſe it, he ſhall not* EXACT *it of his neighbour* †. And that this Law was not meant to extend to every caſe; but only to ſuch debtors as were poor and inſolvent, may

* Prov. v. 10. † Deut. xv. 1, 2.

SERM. X. appear both from that limitation, which follows quickly after, *ſave when there ſhall be no* poor *among you* *; (intimating clearly, that they might require payment of all others;) and from the caution, which is yet farther ſubjoin'd, that this cuſtom of releaſe ſhould not incline them, when that ſeventh year approach'd, to *harden their heart*, or *ſhut their hand againſt their* POOR *brother*; but they ſhould by all means *open their hand wide unto him, and ſhould ſurely lend him ſufficient for his need* †. This crime of EXACTION would, no doubt, be greatly aggravated, if the Debt itſelf aroſe from ſome act of injuſtice and oppreſſion; if they had taken any unreaſonable advantage of their brother's neceſſity, and were not aſhamed, as they had opportunity, to grind the faces of the poor. For then their preſent exaction, of what at firſt was wrongfully extorted, would be but a freſh allowance and repetition of the crime. And therefore it is declared, in the verſe next but one after the Text, to be the proper End of a religious Faſt; that they, who have been guilty of any ſuch uncharitable griping and extortion, ſhould make faithful reſtitution for the injuries they have done, and be careful for the future, that they do no more. *Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens,*

* Deut. xv. 4. † Ver. 7, 8, 9.

and

and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke *? SERM. X.

Nor was it enough, that they abſtained from actual Injuries, or made amends for ſuch as had been done; they muſt proceed farther, to acts of Almſgiving and Liberality; to *open their hand wide* (as the Law terms it) *to their brother, to the poor and needy in their land* †. For ſo the Prophet goes on; *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh* ‡?

Whilſt therefore theſe *Jewiſh* Hypocrites were ſo notoriouſly guilty in this particular, ſo far from extending Mercy to the Poor, that they unmercifully griped and cruelly oppreſſed them; with what face could they expect to have their Faſts accepted? Could thoſe Souls be duly humbled before God, which were ſo unreaſonably exalted among men? Could thoſe Hearts be ſoftened and contrite under the ſenſe of Guilt, which to all Impreſſions of Pity were harder than an adamant? Or could they be ſuppoſed to love God in Sincerity, whom they had *never ſeen*; whilſt they retained ſuch hatred, and ſhut up their Bowels, againſt their Brethren, whom they *had?* No; the counterfeit is here too groſs to be concealed; and *with what mea-*

* Iſaiah lviii. 6. † Deut. xv. 11. ‡ Iſaiah lviii. 7.

SERM. X. *ſure* they did *mete*, they muſt expect *it ſhould be meaſured to them again.* If they would find Mercy from God, they muſt ſhew it to their Brethren, and ſtrive to be bountiful as well as juſt. For ſo again it follows, a few Verſes after; *If thou take away from the midſt of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger and ſpeaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy ſoul to the hungry, and ſatisfie the afflicted ſoul; then ſhall thy light riſe in obſcurity, and thy darkneſs be as the noon day* *.

There is indeed a *twofold* Reaſon, why the Duty of *Alms* ſhould be annexed to That of *Faſting*. The *firſt*, becauſe they are Duties of a like kind; they are both of them proper acts of Self-denial, both voluntary Mulcts or Puniſhments upon ourſelves: and as Faſting implies a ſenſe of our Unworthineſs of daily bread; ſo this liberal parting with our money will expreſs a like ſenſe of our Unworthineſs, to be ſure, of the Riches, or even of the common Comforts and Conveniences of Life; nay they are both neceſſary means of diſengaging our Affections from any unreaſonable attachment to theſe periſhing Enjoyments; and ſo of qualifying us for that uniform Submiſſion to the Will of God, which is required in them, who would ſerve him in newneſs of Life. And therefore as Faſting is often recommended to this purpoſe, ſo it was the Prophet *Daniel*'s advice to King *Nebuchadnez-*

* Iſaiah lviii. 9, 10.

zar;

zar; that he would *break off his ſins by righteouſneſs*, (or *Almſgiving*, as that word often ſignifies in Scripture) *and his iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor*; *if it might be a lengthening of his tranquillity* ‡. SERM. X.

The *other* Reaſon for joining them together, is, becauſe whilſt in faſting we retrench our uſual expences, by giving away what is ſo ſaved and more, we ſhall eſcape the ſcandal of faſting only to ſave charges; and evince it to be in truth *a matter of bounty, not of covetouſneſs.*

3. *Thirdly* The laſt Objection made to the faſting of theſe Hypocrites, is their uncharitable and contentious Spirit: *Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs.*

There were ſome among the *Jews*, who faſted meerly out of Vanity and Oſtentation; to be ſeen of men, and reckoned more excellent than their Neighbours: who, tho' they neglected the *weightier matters of the law*; yet whilſt they were exact in theſe external, ſeemly Formalities, *truſted in themſelves that they were righteous, and deſpiſed others* *; like thoſe other Hypocrites, elſewhere mentioned by this Prophet, which ſaid, *ſtand by thy ſelf, come not near to me*; *for I am holier than thou* †. Such was the Caſe of the vainglorious *Phariſee*, who *ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf*; *God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are*; *or even as this Publican.* I

‡ Dan. iv. 27. * Luke xviii. 9. † Iſaiah lxv. 5.

faſt

SERM. X. *fast twice in the week* ||. For such, it is no wonder, if their superficial Services be rejected by the Searcher of hearts; if whilst they fast meerly out of Strife and Contention, they be reckoned only as an offensive *smoke in his nose, a fire that burneth all the day*; if, lastly, whilst it is their principal aim to be distinguished in the eye of the world for men of an uncommon Severity, they be left to seek their reward only among men; and *verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

But it may be, there is something more intended by this Fasting *for strife and debate.* Their wanting to *smite with the fist of wickedness*, looks as if the *Jewish* State was at that time divided by civil feuds and dissensions; and implacably bent upon each other's overthrow. Their Fasting for that purpose, looks moreover, as if they meant to colour their designs with Pretences of Religion; and to draw in God himself for a Party in the Quarrel. This, in both sides would be highly unreasonable; because we may not pray to God to gratify our private Revenge: and altho' our Cause should be most just and equitable; yet we ought not to wish for its support in the destruction, but rather in the conversion of our enemies. But, in one side it must be most amazingly monstrous: for what can be more highly impious, than that they whose Cause is founded in iniquity, and the defiance of all law,

|| Luke xviii. 11, 12.

should

ſhould invoke the righteous Judge of all the earth on their ſide, and expect his Aſſiſtance, who is not the God of confuſion, but of peace? SERM. X.

But whether ſuch were the condition of the *Jewiſh* State or no; we are ſure there have been thoſe among ourſelves, who have held frequent Faſtings, and made long Prayers for ſucceſs to the moſt execrable Treaſons; and have even then pretended to be ſeeking the Lord, when they embrued their hands in the blood of his Anointed. There can be no juſt ground to hope ſuch Faſts ſhould be accepted; when the very end or deſign of them is ſo foul and deteſtable: and if God ſhould at any time ſuffer ſuch deſigns to proſper, it is not becauſe he hears the Prayers, or regards the Faſtings of ſuch audacious wretches; but to fulfil ſome other wiſe Purpoſes of Providence, reſerving theſe Offenders to a farther time of Vengeance, to ſuſtain *that recompence of their error which is meet.*

Upon the whole matter we perceive, that ſo long as the End of our Faſting is to purſue ſome unlawful and forbidden Purpoſe; ſo long as the method of it is nothing elſe but an outward appearance of afflicting Severities, without any real Humiliation of Soul, or change in our Affections; ſo long as we ſhew Love only with our mouths, but in our hearts go after Covetouſneſs or Ambition, or any other kind of Luſt, our Services muſt be vain and inſignificant: and however we may haply impoſe upon the world by ſuch ſpecious

Forma-

SERM. X. Formalities; however we may deceive even our own selves, thro' partiality and fond prejudice, satisfied with vain conceits of *opus operatum*, or not enquiring enough into the state and condition of our souls; yet God will not be so mocked or deceived: but *he that pondereth the heart will be sure to consider it* thoroughly *; and will render to every man, not according to the outward appearance; but according to the inward Sincerity and real Virtue of his Works.

And does not *our heart* then *burn within us*, while we are *talking of these things?* Does it not smite and reproach us, at the remembrance of our past coldness and indifference in our most solemn Humiliations and Approaches to God? How careless we have been at best, if not altogether insincere and hypocritical? Let this reflection be improved to quicken our Zeal and Diligence in the Duties of this holy Season; that we may no more incur the Guilt of *drawing near* to him with *our lips, when our hearts are far from him*; of punishing our bodies, without afflicting our souls; of fasting for none else but vain or sensual purposes; but may so *worship God in spirit and in truth*, so humble ourselves before the Searcher of hearts, that he in his due time may lift us up to spiritual Joy and Consolation in this life present, and in the world to come may raise us to eternal life, through *Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom*, &c.

* Prov. xxiv. 12.

SER-

SERMON XI.

JUSTIFICATION *the* Privilege *of good* Chriſtians.

ROM. viii. 33, 34.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth:
Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.

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ST. *Paul* having in this Epiſtle unanſwerably aſſerted, that the Salvation propoſed in the Goſpel is a Privilege not due to us in a ſtate of nature; (wherein we appear ſinners, and ungodly trangreſſors of the Law, and as ſuch expoſed to the vengeance of the Lawgiver;) nor merited by any works of legal righteouſneſs; (which ſince no man can perfectly diſcharge, our deficiency therein muſt leave us liable to the Curſe and Condemnation of the Law;) but meerly the effect of God's Grace and Mercy thro' *Chriſt*, redeeming us from the Curſe, to which we were by nature liable; (from which no legal obedience of our own could reſcue us;) propoſing

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posing to us the way and means of reconciliation, and so putting it to our own choice and option to be happy if we will: Having done all this, in the former part of the Epistle, he proceeds in the *first* verse of the Chapter before us, to sum up the matter, briefly thus: that *there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit: i. e.* that they, who are received into the Communion and Fellowship of *Christ*'s Church, and pay such an Obedience of Faith, as shews them to be *transformed and renewed in the Spirit of their mind*, shall be thereupon entitled to the Benefits of his Redemption, and rescued from the Curse and Condemnation of the Law; from that Wrath and Vengeance of God they could not otherwise escape.

From hence, he takes occasion, to set forth the Terms of the Covenant of Grace, upon which this Salvation is proposed; to urge the necessity of a spiritual Life; to state the Privilege of Adoption hereupon confer'd, and to arm the Partakers of this Privilege with Patience under afflictions, as not able, in reality, to annoy or injure them: 'till from this mention of the impotence of human malice, he resumes his former Conclusion, and breaks out in this triumphant Exclamation; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is*

is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. As if he had said; 'Tis evident then, beyond contradiction, that there can be no Impeachment brought against the true Christian, there can no Sentence of Condemnation be pronounced upon him: For who shall pretend to accuse us, or what Accusation need we fear, when the God we have provoked, himself becomes our Patron, and frankly forgives, wherein we have offended him? Or who shall presume to censure and condemn us; whose sentence need we value or be concerned at; when *Christ*, who is our proper Judge, is the very Person that has bought us with his Blood; and has since that risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, there to plead our Cause, and *appear* an Advocate *in the presence of God for us?* SERM. XI.

What shall we then say to these things? (as the Apostle puts the question in the verse next but one before the Text) *if God be for us, who can be against us?* If we have our Pardon from our injured Sovereign, and are acquitted by him, who is ordained our Judge; what need we be in fear of any fellow Criminals, or apprehend the Sentence and Opinion of those, who stand impleaded at the same Bar with our selves, and can have no Authority or Power over us?

Nor will the sense of this Passage be greatly varied, if we should (as some Interpreters would

SERM. XI. would have us) read the whole Period interrogatory, thus:—*Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? ſhall God that juſtifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Is it Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us?* Which Reading ſeems to be not a little countenanced, by the continuance of the ſame ſtile in the following Verſe, where the interrogation is manifeſtly neceſſary; *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs*, &c.? I ſay the Senſe is not hereby greatly varied. For ſtill it implies, that God, who juſtifies, cannot accuſe *the Elect*; and that they need fear no one elſe; that *Chriſt*, who died to redeem them; who alſo roſe again, and is exalted at God's right hand, to be their Advocate and intercede for them, will be ſure not to condemn them; and that they have nothing to fear or apprehend from the Sentences of others.

In diſcourſing farther from the Words, I ſhall take occaſion

I. To inſiſt, in general, upon the Nature and Conditions of that Salvation, which the Goſpel propoſes, that *Juſtification* of the *Elect*, which gives them Confidence before God, and ſecures them from the danger of any Condemnation. And then

II. To explain more particularly the Method of our Redemption by Chriſt's Death,

and Resurrection, and Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the Presence of the Father, and make for ever Intercession for us. SERM. XI.

I. FIRST then, I would insist in general, upon the nature and conditions of that Salvation, which the Gospel proposes, that *Justification* of the *Elect*, which gives them confidence before God, and secures them from the danger of any Condemnation. For the clearing of which Point, I shall consider,

1. The Character of the persons entitled to this Privilege; and they are God's *Elect*.

2. The Privilege itself at present bestowed, as an earnest of future Happiness, *viz.* *Justification* before God. *It is God that justifieth.* And then,

3. The great satisfaction to be taken in this Privilege, or the freedom they enjoy from the power of any accusation or condemning sentence. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.* Of these severally in their order. And,

1. *First* then, I begin with considering the Character of the persons entitled to this Privilege; and they are God's *Elect*. Now, whatever wild notions some may have conceiv'd of the *Election* of God, fondly imagining it to be the certain and arbitrary fore-appointment of such and such particular persons to eternal Happiness; whilst the rest of

SERM. XI. mankind are left or given up to the dominion of their natural corruptions, and so cut off from any share in that Salvation by *Christ*: yet if we would take our notions of this matter from those accounts, which are given of it in Scripture, we should find it does, in its first and primary sense, mean nothing more than our being receiv'd into the Church of God, our being admitted to "the means of "Grace and hopes of Glory," at present, and so put in the way to partake of everlasting Happiness hereafter.

This is justly reputed the *Election* or Choice of God, in a *twofold* respect; both as the persons so admitted are separated from the rest of mankind, and chosen to these glorious Privileges before others; who are left to the darkness of their own reasonings, and the obscure impressions of natural Religion: and likewise as there is nothing, on their part, to engage God to it; but they being themselves unworthy, and wretchedly polluted with Sin, it is meerly the effect of his own free Choice, his Grace and Bounty. Thus *Christians* in general (as the *Israelites* of old) are reckon'd by St. *Peter a chosen* or elect *generation*; and That for this very reason, because God had called them out *of darkness into his marvellous light* *.

But this cannot, I judge, be St. *Paul*'s meaning in the Text; because many, who are

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

thus

thus elected, or admitted to a visible communion with the Church, are yet liable to various accusations, and shall not be finally justified before God; and consequently can have no right to have this glorious challenge made in their behalf: *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth.* Accordingly our blessed Saviour, we find, makes a manifest distinction between them, who are thus *called* or admitted to the means of Grace, and them that are *chosen* or elected afterwards. He does this, in the application of a Parable, design'd to represent the state of the *Christian* Church, consisting of visible Members, both good and bad; both such as answer the end of their Vocation, and such as answer it not. The *called* therefore, in this place, are such as are receiv'd into the *Christian* Church, and so admitted to the means and hopes of Salvation. But the *Chosen* or *Elect* are not all that partake of this outward Privilege; but only such of them, as *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called*, and so answer the gracious ends and purposes of him who called them. And these are very pertinently denominated the *Elect* or *Chosen* of God: because all such as thus obey his Call, such as not only comply with the external Terms of Communion, but render him the spiritual and acceptable obedience of *Faith*, and conform their minds, their wills, and their affections, to the holy precepts and com- SERM. XI.

SERM. XI. mands of his Religion; all such he graciously CHOOSES to himself, pardoning their offences thro' *Christ*, exempting them from the Punishment of the ungodly, adopting them for his own Children, and making them heirs of everlasting Happiness. Which leads me to the

2. *Second* thing proposed to be consider'd under this Head; namely, the Privilege at present bestowed on the *Elect*, as an earnest of their future Happiness, *viz. Justification:* It is God that *justifieth.* Justification, according to the known use of that word in Scripture, must be explain'd in a *forensick* sense, to signify the acquitting of those persons, (or treating them, in a judicial way, as just, innocent or righteous persons,) who stood indicted or accused of Crimes committed against the Majesty of God. By acquitting indeed we do not understand (as that word imports commonly in human Courts of Judicature) that the party so indicted or accused should be declared never to have committed the Facts laid to his charge, nor in consequence of them, been guilty and delinquent. For inasmuch as *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*; we must of ourselves be liable to the sanctions of his Law: and should he be *extream to mark what is done amiss*; there could, in this sense, *no flesh living be justified* before him. But we mean, the discharging of them from the imputation of Sin, who

in

in themselves were certainly delinquent; and so indeed absolving them from the guilt of their Crimes; and thereby from the obligation they were under to Punishment on their account. SERM. XI.

That This is the true import of *Justification* in the sacred Scriptures, might appear from various instances. I shall produce but one; and that shall be that remarkable one of St. *Paul* in the Acts: *Be it known unto you brethren, that thro' this man is preach'd unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are* justified *from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses* *. Here that, which had been first called *forgiveness of sins*, is afterwards (we see) explain'd farther, and carried on to such cases, as the Law could not reach, under the name of *Justification*. To be justified FROM a thing, can manifestly mean no less than the being cleared from something, which (if suffer'd to remain) must be a stain and blemish. And had the Apostle only meant a declaration of innocence, with regard to facts never committed, or which, if committed, were not really criminal; the Gospel, in that respect, would be but ill opposed to the Law; since no Law can be so rigorous, as to charge them with Guilt, who are perfectly innocent and clear of Offence: and therefore if this had been the meaning or design of the word, the

* Acts xiii. 38, 39.

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Law and the Gospel would both *justify* alike.

So then, to know how far the *Mosaick* Law could *justify*, we must enquire, what provision it made for the forgiveness of Sins; how far its transgressors were allow'd an Expiation; and wherein it fell short and left them destitute of remedy. It provided then a remedy against those legal impurities, or ritual pollutions, which the numerous observances and exact niceties of the Law made often unavoidable. It provided likewise against the lesser offences; against Sins of ignorance and infirmity; against Sins committed by accident, mistake or inadvertency. For these it prescribed certain Sacrifices; which, as on the offender's part they were acknowledgments of his crime, so on God's they were accepted as atonements for it. But there was no mention of pardon to *presumptuous* Offences, or such as were reckon'd to be done with settled pride and contempt of the Lawgiver's authority. They were sometimes punished with death, and always (whether by men discover'd or not) they were left to the just Judgment of God; without any express promise of forgiveness in the Law itself, tho' upon the severest Repentance, and bitterest Remorse. The Law prescribed no Sacrifices to expiate or atone for them. *For thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee*, said *David*, when he labour'd under the guilt and burden of Murther and Adultery. In-

Indeed, as the *legal* impurities, which were expiated by the Law, did figure out the *moral* uncleanness and pollution of our nature; so there is no doubt, but the Sacrifices prescribed for the expiation of such impurities, did likewise figure out that perfect Sacrifice of *Christ*, by which we are deliver'd, as well from the power, as the punishment of Sin. They then who could see into this spiritual meaning and design of the Law, might doubtless derive comfort to themselves, and assurances of pardon. But then it ought to be remember'd, that the Law of *Moses*, thus consider'd and explain'd, is nothing else but the Gospel in another view: And when they are opposed to one another, and the Law is described as bringing into bondage and death; it is then consider'd by itself, and in the naked Letter; as it contains a rigorous prescription of Duty, and could provide no expiation of its own for presumptuous Offences. SERM. XI.

But what the law could not do in that it was weak, That *Christ* has done for us. He has offer'd a full and perfect Sacrifice for Sin: so that thro' him, we are now *justified from all things, from which we could not have been justified by the law of Moses.* God has accepted this his Sacrifice, as the price of our Redemption, an ample satisfaction for our manifold Offences; and has declared his acceptation of it by raising him from the dead, and placing him at his own right hand.

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And who then ſhall venture to diſpute or call this *Juſtification* of God's *Elect* in queſtion; when he conſiders the authority by which it is done, and that *it is* GOD *that juſtifieth?* For tho' we are ſometimes ſaid to be *juſtified by* FAITH, yet, it is eaſy to diſtinguiſh between the Author of this Privilege, and the Condition of beſtowing it. *Faith in Chriſt*, as our Saviour and Redeemer, is the condition on our part, required to qualify and fit us for the reception of this Privilege; and indeed the means of making application of it to ourſelves in particular, and that too (we may obſerve by the way) not a dead, fruitleſs ineffectual Faith, but ſuch as is fruitful of good works and operates by love.

From hence then, we are ſaid to be *juſtified by faith*, or upon account of our having that qualifying Condition: and therefore when we find it ſaid, *it is* GOD *that juſtifieth*; we muſt have another notion of the phraſe, and underſtand Him mention'd as the Author of our Juſtification, as the Judge acquitting and abſolving us, and ſo receiving us into his Favour and Protection.

This, if it be underſtood of *Chriſt*, is true of him immediately, he being the perſon appointed of the Father *to be the Judge of quick and dead.* He therefore *juſtifies* or pardons all that truly believe in him: and ſince the Divine Nature is in him, perſonally united to the human; it may be ſaid properly of him,

that

that *it is* God *that justifieth.* Or if it be understood here of the Father; (as one would rather imagine;) it is to be consider'd, that as the actions of each person in the Trinity are common to all the three; so in this instance of Judgment it cannot be understood, that when the Father *committed all judgment to the Son*, he did thereby cease to be Judge himself; but only that the Person of the Son was more eminently display'd and manifested in it. SERM. XI.

From this consideration of the Privilege and its Author, let us go on now in the

3. *Third* place, to consider the great satisfaction and comfort to be taken in it, or the freedom which persons thus justified enjoy from the power of any accusation, or condemning sentence: *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.*

Not that we are to suppose from hence they shall perfectly escape accusations and censures of all kinds! Those are the works of enemies, and therefore 'till good men shall have no enemies remaining; they must not expect to be altogether free from accusations. Their Adversary the *Devil*, in particular, rages against them with such implacable and restless fury, that he is from thence emphatically called, *the Accuser of the brethren.* He has his Agents and Instruments every where at work; and it is

SERM. XI. is equal to them, be the accuſation true or falſe, ſo they can but occaſion any miſchief to the Church of God. For which reaſon we have no grounds to expect it ſhould eſcape the ſlander of malicious men, inſtigated and ſupported in their charge by the Father of Lies, and grand enemy of all Righteouſneſs.

But be their Malice as reſtleſs and indefatigable as it will; yet what can all their Efforts do before the Bar of God? Will he be awed or biaſſed, flattered or deceived? Does he want their information, or will he give credit to their calumnies? No. They may ſometimes do us prejudice in human courts; they may get us cenſured or condemned by men. But who would value their Sentence, that is ſecure of a Pardon in Heaven? Who would not rather, in that caſe, exclaim with the Apoſtle?--*If God be for us, who can be againſt us?*

It was not then his meaning, that no one would condemn, that no one would accuſe the Elect; but that nothing of this nature could do them any real or final Injury; ſo long as they had God on their ſide, and had ſecured to themſelves an Intereſt in the Death of *Chriſt*. And then the caſe is plain and evident. For who, can we imagine, ſhould ſucceed in his Suit againſt thoſe, whom God will juſtify? Who, can we conceive, ſhould have Intereſt enough to condemn thoſe, whom *Chriſt* has died to ſave?

Not that we have any grounds from hence to conclude for the absolute Indefectibility of Grace; or that it is in the nature of the thing impossible to decline or fall away from this State of Salvation into Sin and Wickedness! Much less (which yet some have blasphemously taught) that the *Elect* may commit the greatest Enormities without falling from that State, or being guilty before God: for that, God beholds no Sin in them: but graciously overlooks and pardons every thing they do. This is indeed to *turn the grace of God into lasciviousness*; it is to *use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh*, and convert the wholsome Doctrine of the Gospel into *a cloak of maliciousness*. But surely there can be no just grounds for such an Inference from the Passage before us. Most true indeed it is, that the *Elect* shall have their Sins pardoned and wiped away, and not placed to their account. For they whom God finally receives to Glory, must needs be freed from the Charge and Imputation of Sin. And 'tis (as we have seen) in this remission or *forgiveness of sins*, that this glorious Privilege of *Justification* does properly consist. SERM. XI.

But then, who are the Persons thus said to be *elected* or *justified?* Not any, who wilfully and presumptuously offend against the Precepts of Religion; not any, who abuse the Mercies they enjoy, and *glory in their shame*; but they, who readily pay an evangelical Obedience,

SERM. XI. dience, who *bewail* the Defects they cannot wholly *prevent*, and *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; who, in one word, *walk worthy of their* Christian *Vocation*, and so answer the gracious Ends and Purposes of him who *called* them. Such Children then of Light are they, whom God is said to *justify*. But if they deviate from this Character, and walk in Darkness; they forfeit then their Privilege, and that Freedom from Condemnation, which is here promised them: *all their former righteousness shall not be remembered*; but for their wilful and continued Disobedience *they shall surely die.*

The Improvement I would make of this discourse shall be in few words.

1. *First,* let us humbly admire and thankfully adore that Goodness of God, who has thus graciously been pleased to call us to this State of Salvation; to make us the kind Offers of Mercy; to send his Son to procure and propose to us Terms of Reconciliation, and *call us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* Not so, dealt he *with the Angels that sinned*; *but cast them down to hell:* he left them to that Misery they brought upon themselves, and gave them up to Ruin and Damnation. But, when Man had forfeited his Favour, by transgressing his Command; he graciously provided a Remedy in the Son of his

his Love, who *took not on him the nature of Angels, but the seed of Abraham.* SERM. XI.

2. *Secondly*, let us take care however *to make* this *our calling and election sure.* For these Privileges, we see, are not to be bestowed promiscuously on all, who become visible Members of the Church of *Christ*. No. For tho' there be many, who are thus *called*, yet but few are *chosen.* And they then only are *the chosen*, they only are the *Elect* of God, whom he at last will *justify*, and who thro' the Merits of the Death of *Christ*, shall be freed from Condemnation.

Now, who are these *Elect*, and entitled to this *Justification*, we have already seen; they are such only as walk worthy of their high Calling; they are only such whose lively Faith in *Christ* exerts itself in a suitable Obedience, tho' not perfect and sinless, yet unfeigned and sincere. And how highly then does it concern us all to take heed to our ways, to conform our Faith and Practice to the Gospel Rule, that so we may be found in the Number of those, whom God at last will choose? How should it caution even those that stand, to *take heed lest they fall*, to beware *lest any root of bitterness spring up*, which by withdrawing them from their first Stedfastness, may forfeit their Title to these glorious Privileges, and make them decline from that Grace of God wherein they now stand.

3. *Thirdly*,

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3. *Thirdly*, Being satisfied in the Reflections of a good Conscience; let us entertain an humble confidence, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Let us despise all menaces or allurements below; and remember there is no motive can be here proposed, which is *worthy to be compared with that* abundant *glory, which shall* hereafter *be revealed in us.* Whom need we fear, or what more should we desire; when we have made him our Friend, who is our King and Judge? What, *tho' the Heathen rage, and the rulers take their counsel together*; nay, what *tho' the very earth were moved, and the hills were carried into the midst of the sea?* So long as *God is for us, who can be against us?* Whilst he *justifies* us, what Accusation shall we be in pain for? or what Condemnation shall we apprehend or dread; when *Christ*, who is to judge us at the last day, and whose Sentence must be finally decisive of our Doom, is the very Person that died to redeem us; *yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?* Which might lead me in order to the SECOND Head proposed. But that must be reserved for the Subject of our future Meditations. *Now to God the Father, God the Son,* &c.

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SERMON XII.

The Death *of* CHRIST *a proper* Satisfaction.

ROM. viii. 33, 34.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth:
Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.

HAving treated in general, of the Nature and Conditions of our Juſtification and Salvation, which was the FIRST Head propoſed, I proceed now in order, in the SERM. XII.

II. SECOND place, to explain more particularly the Method of our Redemption by *Chriſt*'s Death and Reſurrection and Exaltation at the right Hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the Preſence of the Father, to plead our Cauſe and intercede in our behalf. *It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.* Of all which Particulars ſeverally and diſtinctly in their order. And

1. *Firſt*

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1. *First*, in treating of the Death of *Christ*, I shall take occasion to do these three things *viz.*

(1.) To confirm or prove the Certainty of the Fact, that *Christ* did actually die.

(2.) To explain the End of his Death, *viz.* the Redemption and Salvation of the Elect. And then

(3.) To enquire more exactly into the Nature of the Satisfaction of the Death of *Christ*.

(1.) *First* then, I am to confirm or prove the Certainty of the Fact, that *Christ* did actually die.

There were some Hereticks of old, who taught that *Christ* was man, no otherwise than in appearance or outward shew; that he assumed only an imaginary body, or some airy vehicle, and so became visible in form of man, without being cloathed in reality with human flesh. They who believed his Incarnation to be thus imaginary, must of consequence suppose his Death and Sufferings imaginary too; unless a Phantom may be put to pain; or That expire and die, which never lived. But, if we make the Oracles of God the Rule of our judgment in this matter; we shall there find such Proofs of his real Incarnation, as can no way be evaded; such express mention of his Conception and Birth, his Family and Kindred, his increasing in Stature like other men, his various Works and Discourses with the *Jews*; that we may as well

well believe our ſelves to be meer Spectres and Phantoms, as imagine Him to have been no more. SERM. XII.

But of all the Proofs to be produced of this kind, there is none more convincing, than the Evidence we have of his Death and Burial. Among which, I ſuppoſe, I need not urge, that This was expreſly foretold in the *old Teſtament*, and is as expreſly related in the *new*; that *it behoved Chriſt* thus *to ſuffer and to enter into his glory*, and that he did accordingly. So far as this, is known to every body; and the Meaning of the Scripture, in that Point, is too plain to be diſputed: That conceit of ſome Noveliſts among us, that theſe things are to be figuratively underſtood, altho' told in the moſt naked, unexceptionable terms, being too light and fanciful, to want a ſerious confutation.

Inſtead then of inſiſting on the Authority of Scripture, let us attend a little to the Circumſtances of the Fact, as it is there related; which are ſuch as do effectually take off all ſuſpicion of Impoſture in the matter. Let it therefore be conſidered, in the firſt place, that the care of putting him to death was committed to his Enemies. The *Roman* Soldiers, who had already mocked and derided him, had now their barbarous Malice ſupported by the Governor's Authority. They were attended and aſſiſted by the *Jewiſh* Rabble; who loaded him now with reproaches and

SERM. XII. invectives, whom ere while they had received with *Hoſannas*, and applauded as *the Son of David*. And they were all puſhed on by the bloody Zeal of the chief Prieſts and Rulers; whoſe love of earthly greatneſs and felicity had given a wrong turn to their Interpretation of Scripture; and made them, whilſt they expected a temporal Prince, reject the true *Meſſiah*, and Saviour of Mankind.

All theſe, no doubt, together would take care, to make ſure of the work they were about. Their malice could not fail to prompt them punctually to execute the direful ſentence, and ſee him paſt recovery, whom they ſo implacably purſued. And yet, if any ſuſpicion could be left of their ſhewing him favour, of their relenting when they ſaw his ſufferings, or abating the rigor of their malice towards him; yet all That too will be entirely taken off, when it is farther conſider'd, that his body, after this, was committed to his friends: who doubtleſs, had there been any, but the leaſt remains of life, would have been careful to improve the flattering proſpect, and, with their Maſter, to have revived their languid hopes. But does any thing of this nature appear? No; they buried him:---and were ſo far from thinking of reſtoring him to life, that with the arts of embalming, at that time uſual with the *Jews*, they were preparing to ſecure his body againſt that ſtench and putrefaction, to which dead bodies otherwiſe

are liable. And now they, who can believe him for all this, not to have been dead, whoſe body his enemies had granted to his friends; and his friends had committed to the grave; they may believe, for ought I ſee, that we have none but *dead* men walking about our ſtreets, whilſt our Church-yards are filled with *living*. This is indeed a Truth, which is freely granted to us by the moſt implacable adverſaries of our Religion. Both *Jews* and *Heathens* are willing to admit, that *Jeſus* did expire on the croſs: and they mention it as the reproach of *Chriſtianity*; that He, whom we profeſs to follow, ſhould be treated with ſuch indignity: Whilſt it is the diſtinguiſhing Character of the true *Chriſtian*, to *glory in the croſs of Chriſt*, and eſteem That to be matter of the juſteſt conſolation, which they would urge to our diſhonour. SERM. XII.

Such Evidence then have we for the proof of this important Article: An Article which will appear to be of the utmoſt weight and conſequence, when I ſhall, in the

(2.) *Second* place, have explain'd the End of his Death, *viz.* the Redemption and Salvation of the *Elect*. For to them St. *Paul* has manifeſtly reſtrain'd it in the paſſage now before us. He is ſpeaking of the Privileges of *the Elect* or Choſen of God; and their exemption, upon account of thoſe privileges, from the danger of any accuſation, which can be

SERM. XII. brought againſt them. *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth: Who is he that condemneth*, viz. the ſame perſons, *the Elect? It is Chriſt that died.* Chriſt has offer'd up himſelf a Sacrifice for them, to redeem them from that Curſe, to which they were by nature liable. And indeed that he died for the Salvation of all ſuch, as ſincerely believe in and obey him, is ſo very plainly taught us in numberleſs Paſſages of the holy Scriptures, that there can be no reaſonable doubt remaining in this matter. But there are *two* other queſtions, which, tho' by an attentive Reader of the Scriptures they might be eaſily determined too, have yet given occaſion to very fierce Contentions and tedious Diſputes. *One* is concerning the Extent and Efficacy of this Redemption; whether Chriſt died for the Elect *only*, excluſively of all others. The *other* is concerning the manner or form of it; whether *Chriſt*'s Death were deſigned in way of Puniſhment, to make *Satisfaction* to the Divine Juſtice for the Diſobedience and Offences of Men.

The *latter* of theſe will be conſidered under the next Particular; and as to the *former* of them, we are ſo expreſly taught, that *Chriſt died for all*, that *he gave himſelf a ranſom for all*, that *he taſted death for every man*, and the like; that one would wonder there ſhould be any oppoſers of the Doctrine of univerſal

Redem-

Redemption: ſince That Doctrine cannot be laid down in plainer and more expreſs Terms, than thoſe, in which we actually have it delivered to us, in the ſacred Scriptures. And leſt any ſhould object the *Fact* againſt the *Deſign*; and conclude, that *Chriſt* intended not his Death for the Salvation of *All*; becauſe *All* ſhall not be actually ſaved; we find the Apoſtle affirming, even of ſuch as periſh, that *Chriſt* died for them. So ſays St. *Paul* in one place, *deſtroy not him with thy meat for whom Chriſt died*; and again in another place, *by thy knowledge ſhall thy weak brother* periſh, *for whom Chriſt died.* From theſe places it inevitably follows, that whatever be the *Effect*, the *Deſign* was *univerſal*; and that Chriſt came into the world, to be the Saviour, not of this or that man only, but of all mankind. For if he died even for them that *periſh*, there can be no queſtion of the reſt; in whom his gracious Purpoſe is accompliſhed, by his ſaving them accordingly. SERM. XII.

But what then, it will be aſked, is his Deſign fruſtrated? Did he fail of Succeſs in what he undertook? Elſe how comes it, when he died for *All*, that *All* ſhould not receive the Benefit and Advantage of his Death? Why no; he gained the End of his Death, altho' many, for whom he died, ſhall periſh: becauſe he died not for All *abſolutely*, but only upon *condition*, that they ſhould obſerve the Terms of the Goſpel, and

SERM. XII. embrace the Offers that are made them of Salvation. His Merits therefore are ſufficient to extend, and are indifferently propoſed to All; but ſhall in fact extend no farther, than to ſuch as comply with thoſe Conditions, upon which they are propoſed.

If then our Saviour's Death has not effectually ſecured the Salvation of all thoſe, for whom he died; it is not thro' any Deficiency in his Merits; it is not from any want of Acceptance with the Father; but 'tis meerly thro' the negligence or obſtinacy of thoſe men, who are excluded from that invaluable Benefit, to which they might, if they would, have been admitted. So that his Deſign of ſaving *All*, is hereby by no means fruſtrated; ſince that Deſign was but conditional, and is therefore accompliſhed ſufficiently in them, in whom that Condition takes place, which muſt qualify them for the Benefit. From whence we find, that as, on one hand, *Chriſt* is called the Saviour or Redeemer of all mankind; becauſe there is nothing wanting, on his part, to bring all men to be ſaved; ſo, on the other hand, he is ſaid to be *the Author of eternal Salvation to them* only *that obey him*: becauſe in them alone his gracious Purpoſe takes place; whilſt all the reſt of Mankind ungratefully refuſe their own Mercy, and ſhut out themſelves from that Salvation he has purchaſed for them.

This

This then being the true ſtate of the caſe; SERM. the *Elect*, or they that obey him, being the only Perſons, to whom he will actually become the Author of eternal Salvation; we have from hence a plain reaſon, why St. *Paul* here mentions it as matter of comfort to ſuch only, and an argument of their Freedom from Condemnation; *Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died.* XII.

But ſince it may ſtill be aſked, which way it ſhould come to paſs, that *Chriſt*'s Death ſhould redeem Mankind from Miſery, and entitle them to Happineſs; whether it was deſigned to ſatisfy the Divine Juſtice for our Diſobedience and Offences; it remains, that I proceed now, in the

(3.) *Third* and laſt place, to enquire a little more particularly, into the nature of the Satisfaction of the Death of *Chriſt*.

Now That, whether we conſider the Types of it under the *Law*, or the more expreſs accounts given of it in the *Goſpel*, will appear to have conſiſted in his undergoing a vicarious Puniſhment for us, and ſubmitting to Pain and Ignominy in our ſtead, that he might reſcue and releaſe us from it. From the Types under the Law, this appears; becauſe the legal Sacrifices were manifeſtly deſigned, as Expiations or Atonements for the people's Sins; by puniſhing the Victim with the loſs of his Life, inſtead of them, by whom the Law was violated, and to whom there-

SERM. XII. fore, the Punishment was properly and strictly due. For hereby the Sacrifice of *Christ* was plainly signified; who, (since we had forfeited our Lives, our Happiness, and all by our Transgression of the Law of God) submitted himself to Punishment instead of us; and so restored us to the Divine Favour, and gave us a new Title to eternal Life.

The same again is evident from those express Passages of the *new Testament*, where *Christ* is said to have *died, and given himself for us*; to be *our redemption*; to be *made a curse* and *sin for* us; and to have given *himself a ransom for all.* All which and many other expressions do so clearly explain the Nature of Christ's Satisfaction, to have lain in his submitting to Punishment in our stead; that there could be little need of enlarging upon this Subject, had not the wicked industry of some unreasonable men laboured with needless cavils to perplex so plain a truth, and raise a dust to obscure (if possible) and darken, that which shines clearly enough with its own native Lustre.

As such, I reckon that great outcry they make of the Injustice of punishing the innocent for the guilty, and requiring of the spotless Lamb of God the Sins of all mankind. Which would indeed be a material objection, if this had been done without his own consent; but can be of no weight or consequence at all, when his voluntary Oblation of himself

ſelf is taken into the account: unleſs we can ſuppoſe he had no right to lay down his Life, which he aſſured us he had; or contradict one of the moſt unconteſted Maxims of the Schools, that no injury is done to any one who is conſenting. It had indeed been unjuſt to have brought him, right or wrong, to Puniſhment: and This was the Injuſtice of *Pilate* and the *Jews*, who accuſed and condemned an innocent Perſon; who, whatever ſurrender he might make to God, had made none to them, nor had they any ſuch regard to him. Again, it had been no very likely expedient to propitiate the Divine Majeſty, to have inflicted on him, without any ſuch deſign on his part, what the Crimes of others had deſerved. But it was, on the other hand, no way unſeemly or unjuſt, it was indeed every way juſt and honourable, and worthy of God, to accept of that Atonement, which he offered to make, by appearing as our Sponſor or Proxy, and ſubmitting to Puniſhment in our ſtead. SERM. XII.

There was no neceſſity indeed, that his Puniſhment ſhould be perfectly the ſame, in all its circumſtances, with that, to which for our Offences we ourſelves were liable. This, inſtead of perfecting, had defeated our Redemption. For *Chriſt* was not only to die for our Sins, but to *riſe again* likewiſe *for our juſtification*; to aſcend into heaven; to appear there as our Advocate in the Preſence of

SERM. XII. of the Father, and to beſtow ſuch gifts continually, as are neceſſary for his Church. All this muſt have been fruſtrated; unleſs he had firſt *led captivity captive*, and ſubdued thoſe enemies, by which he muſt himſelf have been ſubdued; if he had for ever remained under the Sentence of Death, and felt all that miſerable Deſpair and Horror, which belonged to us.

But then, ſuch is the nature of vicarious Puniſhments, that the *Penalty* itſelf, as well as the *Perſon*, may be changed; and ſuch was, in this caſe, the Dignity of the Perſon ſuffering, as rendered the Exchange worthy of God, and made his Sufferings, tho' of another kind, a fit equivalent for that more grievous Puniſhment, which we deſerved. The Sentence of the Law was *Death:* and to *that* he readily ſubmitted. But the nature of his Office required, he ſhould break the chains of Death; and having ſatisfied the end of the Law, ſhould be reſtored to Life and Immortality.

And let no one from hence take occaſion to complain, that obedience is ſtill required under the ſame Penalty; and that notwithſtanding *Chriſt* has paid this ranſom for us, we are ſtill obnoxious to the ſame Sentence of Damnation. Let no one ſay, that Puniſhment is twice exacted; and that after *Chriſt* has ſuffered once for Sin, 'tis hard the ſinner ſhould be made to ſuffer too. For as the Efficacy

Efficacy of vicarious Puniſhments depends on the good will and acceptance of the Law-giver; and they cannot, but by his allowance, expiate another's guilt; ſo 'tis manifeſt from hence, he may chooſe, whether he will accept them abſolutely as full Satisfactions, or require ſome farther Condition of the criminal himſelf; without obſerving which, he ſhall reap no Benefit from this Atonement. This, if we regard only his authority, is plainly matter of his choice and option: But if we take into the account, his eſſential Wiſdom, Holineſs and Juſtice; it will appear neceſſary, God ſhould ſtill require of us, Faith and Obedience; and extend the Benefits of this Redemption to ſuch only, as labour and aſpire after them; leaving the reſt to that miſerable eſtate, from which they refuſe to be reſcued on ſuch eaſy Terms. SERM. XII.

Thus likewiſe, we ſee, how the Goſpel Privileges of pardon and ſalvation, altho' ſometimes ſaid to be purchaſed by the Blood of *Chriſt*, are yet, at other times, mentioned as the effects of God's free Grace and Mercy; not only as being, on our part, undeſerved, and therefore free to us; but likewiſe, as it is an act of Mercy to accept a Sponſor in our room; and allow the Sufferings he underwent, as an equivalent to ſatisfy, or make compenſation, for thoſe we had deſerved: eſpecially conſidering That Sponſor too, was of his own procuring, not any one we could have

SERM. XII. have found out, or engaged for our ſelves; but the eternal Son of God himſelf aſſuming human fleſh, freely given by his Father, and freely giving up himſelf a Ranſom for all; for *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* And therefore whatever ſome late Pretenders to Reaſon may object, the Apoſtle (we find, who was a better judge of Chriſtianity than they) could ſee no inconſiſtency between God's pardoning *freely*, and *Chriſt*'s paying a Price for our Redemption: but joins them both together, as fairly conſiſtent and amicable Propoſitions. *Being juſtified*, ſays he, *freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt.* The very providing That Redemption was an act of Grace; and we ought ſurely to receive it, as a mark of the higheſt Favour; that when we had abuſed our liberty, and fallen from original Righteouſneſs, *God ſpared not his own ſon; but delivered him up for us all*, to reſcue us from that Miſery, which we had pulled upon our ſelves.

With what humble Confidence ſhould this inſpire us, that he will not be wanting in his future Favours, but together with him, the Son of his love, will *freely give us all things?* And how withal ſhould it inſtruct us, to make him all poſſible returns of Gratitude, to render him not only the tribute of our lips,

lips, but the obedience of our lives; "by giv- SERM.
"ing up our ſelves to his ſervice, and by XII.
"walking before him in holineſs and righ-
"teouſneſs all the days of our lives?" For what grateful acknowledgments can be too great, what expreſſions of Duty can be too tireſom and difficult, to teſtify our ſenſe of his amazing Bounty, who has graciouſly reſcued us from ſuch Deſtruction? How much leſs ſhould we be ſuffered to decline his Service; when the Terms, which he requires, are moſt rational and delightful in themſelves, not any thing impoſſible to human nature, (That had been to banter and make ſport with our Infirmity!) nor any thing uſeleſs and unprofitable in it ſelf (That had been an Act of meer Sovereignty, not of Goodneſs!) but ſuch as may ſerve to improve and meliorate our nature; nay ſuch (I muſt add laſtly) as are neceſſary to prepare and qualify us for thoſe Joys, with which they ſhall at laſt be eternally rewarded. For which reaſon it was wiſely ordained by God, that they only ſhould reap the Benefits of this Salvation by *Chriſt*, who were careful to obey his commands; ſince no others in reality can be qualified to taſte it, without ſuch violence offered to their nature, as is inconſiſtent with the condition of rational and free Agents.

From hence then in concluſion, we may obſerve the oppoſite miſtakes of two ſorts of people, (1.) of thoſe Sectaries who ſo unreaſonably

SERM. XII. sonably decry good Works, as to judge them no way neceſſary in the matter of Salvation; for that *Chriſt* (they think) hath done all for his *Elect*, and requires no duty or obedience from them; whereas *Chriſt*'s Merit (we have ſeen) is not abſolute, but conditional, in the application; and is propoſed to us, only upon condition of our Faith and Repentance, and ſincere Obedience. (2.) Of them likewiſe, on the other hand, who preach up the merit of good Works, and that too ſo far, as to make amends for the failures and deficiencies of others; which plainly derogates from the ample Merits of our Saviour's Death, and repreſents men of extraordinary Piety, as in ſome degree, at leaſt, the Authors of their own and other men's Salvation. The middle way, in this caſe, will be the only ſafe ſtandard of our Faith, and meaſure of our Conduct. The Goſpel propoſes no Happineſs, but to ſuch as give *all diligence to make their calling and election ſure*, and *with fear and trembling to work out their ſalvation*. And This it propoſes, not as the effect of their own merit or ſufficiency, but as purchaſed for them by their dear Redeemer; who died to ſave them from their Sins, and from the Puniſhment due to them; who by his Sufferings has ſatisfied for the guilt of their Offences, and by the Merit of his perfect Obedience, has procured them the Reward of Immortality; and will not fail to apply the Benefits of

of this Merit and Satisfaction to all such worthy disciples, by his prevailing intercession for them, as their great High Priest, and at last, by openly acquitting and receiving them to Glory, as their Judge and King. SERM. XII.

To him with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour, &c.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

The Certainty *of Chriſt's* Reſurrection.

ROM. vii. 33, 34.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth:
Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.

SERM. XIII.

AT my firſt entring upon this Subject, I propoſed theſe TWO things, as general Heads or Topicks of Diſcourſe; namely,

I. To inſiſt in general upon the nature and conditions of that Salvation, which the Goſpel propoſes; that Juſtification of the Elect, which gives them confidence before God, and ſecures them from the danger of any Condemnation. And then

II. To explain more particularly, the method of our Redemption by *Chriſt*'s Death and Reſurrection and Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the

the Presence of the Father, and make continual Intercession for us. SERM. XIII.

The FIRST Head having been finished, in a *former* Discourse; in my *next* I began upon the SECOND: The *First* Particular under which, *viz.* the DEATH of *Christ*, was all that the Solemnity of that Season would permit me to dispatch. But now a more joyful Occasion calls us to the consideration of the

2. *Second* Particular, observable in the method of our Redemption, *viz.* our Saviour's RESURRECTION. It is Christ that died, *yea rather that is* RISEN AGAIN. In treating whereupon, that I may at once answer the great Occasion of this Festival, and likewise the Design of the Apostle, in this place, I would endeavour

(1.) To confirm the *certainty* of the Fact, that *Christ* did actually arise from the dead. Then

(2.) To argue the *necessity* of it. And

(3.) To urge more particularly the *benefits*, which we receive by this our Saviour's *Resurrection*. The

(1.) *First* of these Particulars will take up the remainder of the time, allotted for the present Discourse; in which I purpose to confirm and prove the *certainty* of the Fact, that *Christ* did actually arise from the dead. Which, as it is an essential Article or Doctrine of our most holy Faith, and the main foundation

SERM. XIII. of our Hopes of Happineſs, will deſerve to be very ſeriouſly attended to; and guarded, againſt thoſe cavils with which unreaſonable men have ſet themſelves againſt it.

In the nature of the thing, as well as by the Types and Predictions of the ancient Scriptures, it was neceſſary that *Chriſt* ſhould break the chains of death; and not himſelf continue in that dark captivity, which it was one principal intention of his coming to lead captive and aboliſh. And therefore ſince our *Jeſus* had, by his Miracles, approved himſelf to be that *Chriſt*, who was promiſed as the Saviour of Mankind; it ought not to ſeem incredible, it ought indeed to be believed with full Aſſurance, that all the ancient Prophecies concerning the *Meſſiah* were punctually accompliſhed in him. But I would rather chooſe to inſiſt upon ſuch arguments, as conclude directly for the Fact, than ſuch as prove it but by way of Inference.

And here, if Facts are to be proved by Teſtimony, or the report of credible and authentick Witneſſes, (which has ever been eſteemed the proper proof in matters of this nature) we have the concurrent evidence of great numbers of people, of men and women, of Apoſtles and followers, to convince us of the truth of this momentous Doctrine. For our bleſſed Lord and Maſter had too tender a regard for them he died to redeem, to leave them doubtful or uncertain, and without witneſs,

ness, in a matter of such mighty consequence. SERM. He did not therefore, as soon as he had with- XIII. drawn from the sepulchre, retire out of sight, and enthrone himself immediately in Heaven: but *shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen for forty days* together. In that time, he took several occasions of discovering and manifesting himself to such persons, as he thought proper to employ, as the witnesses of his Resurrection: And if we can stand out against the testimony they deliver, it must be upon one of the two following accounts: either because we suspect they were deluded and imposed upon themselves; or else, because we suspect them of a design to impose on and deceive others.

Now if they were deluded and imposed upon themselves, This must be owing either to the strength of their imagination, and some powerful prepossessions of Enthusiam; or else to the craft of some designing knave or evil spirit, who took upon him to personate their deceased Master, and so make them believe him to be risen from the dead.

But both these are apparently absurd and monstrous suppositions. For which way, in the first place, can we imagine, those very men should on a sudden grow so sanguine in this opinion of their Master's Resurrection, who but very lately had all forsaken him and fled; who understood not the Scriptures, that he must arise from the dead; but were so

SERM. XIII. strangely terrified and astonished at his death, that they began to be in doubt, and suspect they had been mistaken, when they *trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel?* 'Tis manifest they had prepossessions of another kind. They expected he should erect a visible, external kingdom, and were so flushed with the prospect of preferment in it, that his most Divine Discourses, concerning the necessity of his departure, sufficed not to correct their mistake; nor take off those fond conceits they entertained, those expectations they upheld of his continuing among them. For this reason, when he died, they were like men affrighted, and had so little thought of his rising from the dead, that they would not credit the testimony of each other in the matter, but required the evidence and conviction of their own senses. This seems but a very unlikely preparation for such strange enthusiasm to possess them all, as might make them confident and sure their Master was alive, whose death they were afraid had frustrated their former hopes.

But for once, let us imagine them so fickle and inconstant, that it might be possible for their whole number, from the lowest despair, to rise to the highest and most extravagant conceits. Yet was the manner of his appearance such, as may be fairly imputed to a vain imagination? Had they but a transient view of him? Did he only slide gently by them and

and depart? This, melancholy men might fancy, or enthusiastical might feign. But they had the clearest demonstration could be asked or given. They discoursed with him, they eat, they drank, they saw, they handled; they did every thing that was necessary to render their witness unexceptionable. Thus St. *Peter* justly reckons it a clear argument of the certainty of the fact, that they did *eat and drink with him after he arose from the dead* *. And accordingly St. *John*, we declare, *that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life* †. Nay, and we know there was one doubting Apostle, who not only refused to credit the testimony of the rest; but would not promise to believe his own eye sight, if *Jesus* should appear to him; unless he might moreover search the wounds he had received upon the cross, and so have the fullest conviction, that could possibly be given him, that his Lord was risen.

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All this plainly tended to the more confirmation of the Faith. For hereby the Apostles at once took off all suspicion of their being deceived by any airy Phantom, or by vain conceits of their own; and likewise guarded against the possibility of being imposed upon by any other person. For admit it had been possible for some skilful Mimick to have per-

* Acts x. 41. † 1 John i. 1, 3.

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And yet why, on the other hand, ſhould we ſuſpect them of a deſign or combination to deceive us? Why ſhould we believe they talk of what they never ſaw, and relate ſuch wonders as did not really occur? They were perſons by their education little qualified for the forming or carrying on of ſuch a Deſign; and there was a jealous eye kept over them to detect

detect any project they might have ventured to contrive. And over and above all this, (which sufficiently argues such a cheat impracticable) they have given the greatest proof, that can be asked, of their sincerity. They have been so impartial in their account, as not to conceal the failings of their own members; and so couragiously have they defended the account thus given, that after many hardships endured, at last they sealed it with their blood; and chose rather to part with their lives, than depart from their Profession. And he, who can suppose a man to go so far as this, for the sake of what he knows to be false; must first of all suppose him not the wickedest only, but the most foolish too of all men living. And tho' this might perhaps have held in one or two particulars, yet that the whole number should be of the same mind, and not so much as one of them persuaded to recant; This is wholly unaccountable, if the matter had been false; and can be imputed to nothing else but their firm conviction of the truth of it. Nay, and which is more than all, these very persons were enabled to confirm their Testimony by the gift of Miracles, not by one or two Performances, that might seem unusual; but by a great variety of Wonders: and those not of such a kind, as might with any colour be imputed to sleight of hand, or secret artifice; but wrought in the most publick unexceptionable

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SERM. XIII. manner, and with such stupendous Circumstances, as must extort from every rational spectator an undoubted acknowledgment of the finger of God. Tho' persons illiterate and unlearned, yet we find they spake in divers languages, and with such Wisdom and Eloquence, as all their Adversaries *were not able to gainsay or resist.* Tho' persons of no worldly grandeur or authority, yet we see how in an instant they could heal those inveterate diseases, for which no riches or greatness of this world could procure any remedy. Such were the Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection.

But it will be asked, perhaps, why he should appear only to his own Disciples and followers; why he did not rather shew himself to the *Sanhedrin*, or to the people of the *Jews*, that so he might effectually remove all scruples or objections; and leaving them no room to doubt of his Resurrection, might thereby convince them of the truth of his Doctrine; and lead them to embrace that Faith they had so wickedly opposed? Why did he not, it may be asked, go shew himself to *Herod*, who had so impiously insulted and derided him, and let the petty Ruler of *Galilee* behold how that *King of the Jews*, whom he had lately treated with such scorn and contempt, was now *declared to be the Son of God with power*, THE KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS? Why did he not appear in the pre-

preſence of *Pontius Pilate*, the unjuſt judge, that had condemned him, tho' conſcious of his innocence, and yielded him up to the rage and envy of the *Jews?* To have convinced Theſe of their iniquity, and brought them to acknowledge their crime: This it may be thought would have gained the greateſt credit to his Cauſe, and filled his enemies with ſhame and confuſion. SERM. XIII.

But ſure there can be little reaſon to ſuppoſe, that They, who had already hardened themſelves againſt ſo many wonderful methods of Conviction, ſhould now at laſt be perſuaded, by his riſing from the dead. In all theſe there was a *root of bitterneſs*, *an evil heart of unbelief*; ſuch attachment to ſenſual things, as made them moſt averſe to the propoſal of his ſpiritual religion. The *Roman* Governor, who was capable of being influenced to that unrighteous ſentence; can we believe that any motive could ever have ſufficed for his Conviction and Recovery? That *Herod*, who but a few years ſince had murdered *Chriſt*'s Forerunner; and but few days ſince had ſo diſengenuouſly ridiculed himſelf; can it be ſuppoſed that he had any room for remorſe, or was capable of being reformed by any Miracle whatever? And as for the people of the *Jews*, who had been ſo clamorous to procure his crucifixion, who had ſtudied to ſtifle the Fame, or hinder the belief of his former Miracles, to put That *Lazarus* to death

SERM. XIII. death, whose resurrection ere this, was an undeniable evidence of his Divine Power, and therefore an invincible proof of the Doctrine he delivered; can it be expected that they, whose behaviour was so obstinate and disingenuous, should hearken to any farther arguments, that could be used with them; and not rather deny the facts they plainly heard or saw, and find means to evade the Conviction of their own senses?

It is God's usual method to *resist the proud*, and *give* his *grace to the humble*. *The meek shall he guide in judgment, and such as are gentle, them shall he learn his way. If any man* do earnestly and unfeignedly endeavour to *do the will of God*, and discharge the Duties of that station, in which God has placed him: it is *he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God*. For the comfort then, and satisfaction of such humble minds, as well as for their farther direction and encouragement; our blessed Lord was pleased to shew himself to such, as had already discovered their inclination to obey him: whilst the obstinate despisers of his Gospel were excluded from that favour; tho' not left without sufficient means of Conviction, had they but in any suitable measure attended to them.

Had it been enough to assure them of his Resurrection, they wanted not ample testimony of it; and if they were not the favourite persons, to whom he chose to shew himself

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self alive (which sure they had little reason to expect) they had however the concurrent suffrage of many unexceptionable witnesses; men who cannot rationally be suspected to have been deluded or imposed upon themselves, nor to have concurred in a design to deceive or impose on the credulity of others. Men who confirmed their testimony by their mighty Works, *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will**. The *unbelieving Jews* had already stood out against abundant methods of Conviction. And the evidence now added to it, was such as might be fitly preached among the *Gentiles*; when these chosen Witnesses should be sent out among all nations, and disperse the Gospel thro' the dark corners of the earth.

And if this was enough to silence the objections of that perverse generation; so that they had no reason to expect *that* farther Conviction of their own senses, which they had shewn themselves able to withstand in other instances: much less surely should we complain, who have the same Evidence; or urge our want of farther Proof, to excuse our Infidelity, when we have That already, which is abundantly sufficient. It would be most unreasonable to expect ocular Demonstration of such Facts as were transacted many ages

* Heb. ii. 4.

since,

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since, and necessary to be done but once. It is enough, that matters of this kind be attested in a manner not liable to just exception. Posterity must give credit to the witness of their forefathers: and tho' we have seen, there were good reasons, why the *unbelieving Jews* should not be made the witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection; yet if those reasons were less evident, it is no just ground of doubt, to say, that matters are not proved in the manner we would have them, provided it be done in a manner capable of proving them. Let us thankfully make use of the Light, which we enjoy, and not peevishly repine for want of more; when we have enough to guide us right already, if we but attend to it.

But why should I insist so much upon the testimony of his Friends; when the same appears from the confession of his very enemies. The band of Soldiers, set to guard the sepulchre, like men affrighted *ran into the city, and told what they had seen.* So that *that* care, which was taken to secure the body, and prevent the possibility of any imposture, does but supply us with another set of Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection. And tho' they were soon induced, by mercenary views, to change their narrative; yet both they and the *Jews* were of necessity obliged to own thus much at least, that they had the Body no longer in their keeping. Could That have been produced, they had easily silenced

silenced all the Apostles; and no rational man would have believed their testimony, that their Master was alive again, if he had seen and known his body to be dead. How must such a confutation have hindered the imposture from spreading any farther; and even put the Authors out of countenance themselves? But when, instead of this, the body was confessedly removed, notwithstanding the great care and caution they had used to keep it, this could not but give great colour to the report of his Resurrection; too great to be wiped off by the feeble efforts of their groundless suggestions. SERM. XIII.

For what account, after all, could they give of this absence of the body? Why they found out at last this pitiful evasion, that *the disciples had come and stolen it away, while the Soldiers were asleep.* A pretence as weak as it is malicious, and which carries its own confutation along with it! A sure Argument of their judicial blindness and infatuation, to frame a story so inconsistent that it destroys itself! For besides the moral impossibility of the whole band of soldiers falling all so sound asleep at once, that the stone should be rolled away from the sepulchre, and the body carried off without disturbing or awakening any one of them; especially considering the strict discipline observed among the *Romans*, which must make such negligence highly criminal, and therefore dangerous: Besides again, that

SERM. XIII. the grave clothes were ſo duly folded up, that it could not rationally be ſuſpected to have been done in ſuch hurry as the Projectors of ſo bold an enterpriſe muſt needs have uſed: Beſides, that the enterpriſe itſelf was highly improbable, that the diſciples, ſo timorous and diſpirited as they were, ſhould venture to break thro' an armed band of ſoldiers, and riſque all that might be ſuffered from the power of the *Romans*, or the malice of the *Jews:* Beſides This, I ſay, they do hereby manifeſtly invalidate their own teſtimony.

For men, who confeſs themſelves to have been all aſleep, can be but incompetent witneſſes of what was done: and they muſt have a new knack of perception, who can atteſt what was tranſacted, when themſelves were in a ſtate of meer inſenſibility. Upon this ſuppoſition therefore, the diſciples indeed might, or any body elſe, for ought they knew, ſteal the body away. But then it might as well be raiſed by a Divine Power, and their teſtimony, who knew nothing of the matter, will ſerve as much to prove the one as the other. Had they been really aſleep, they ought to have confeſſed their ignorance, and not pretended to give account of a fact, which they aſſert themſelves incapable of obſerving, and which, could they have obſerved it, they would doubtleſs have exerted their utmoſt ſtrength and vigor to prevent. Their having recourſe

recourse to such a sorry shift as this, is it self no small confirmation of the truth I have been aiming to prove, *that Christ is risen from the dead.* For whilst they confessed his body to be no longer in the grave, tho' they had taken such great care and caution to secure it, and could yet account no better for the loss of it, than by this story, which sufficiently confutes it self, and must needs sink under the weight of its own absurdity; they did hereby but strengthen the Cause, which they so feebly opposed, and could gain credit with none but such, as were beforehand dispos'd to be deceived, and willing to believe with them, whether right or wrong. SERM. XIII.

Thus far we have proceeded, in examining the Evidence or proof given of the Fact; and upon a survey of the whole matter, we see abundant reason to conclude for the *Certainty* and undoubted truth of it, that *Christ did* actually *arise from the dead.*

The next thing in order to be done, upon this Subject, is to urge the *Necessity* of it, and shew upon what accounts it was indispensably requisite, that Christ should thus arise from the dead. But this I shall reserve to another opportunity. *Now to God the Father, God the Son,* &c.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

The Neceſſity *and* Benefits *of Chriſt's* Reſurrection.

ROM. viii. 33, 34.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth:
Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.

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WHEN I appeared laſt in this place, as well the order of my Text, as the great occaſion of the Feſtival we then celebrated, led me to diſcourſe to you from that clauſe of the words now read, which concerns our Saviour's Reſurection, *yea rather that is riſen again.* In treating whereupon, that I might at once anſwer the deſign of the Feſtival, and that of the Apoſtle in this place, I propoſed (1.) to examine and ſum up the Evidence of the Fact, in order to confirm or prove its Certainty, that Chriſt did actually ariſe from the dead. Then (2.) to argue the Neceſſity of it, and ſhew upon what accounts it was indiſpenſably requiſite he ſhould thus ariſe.

arise. And (3.) to urge more particularly the Benefits, which we receive by this our Saviour's Resurrection. The *First* of these was all I went thro' at *that* time:—I proceed now, in order to the SERM. XIV.

(2.) *Second* thing proposed, upon this Argument, namely, to urge the *Necessity* hereof, and shew, upon what account it was indispensably requisite, that *Christ should* thus *arise from the dead.* And such indeed was the *Necessity*, that St. *Peter* tells us, it could *not possibly* be otherwise; for *God hath raised him up, having loosed the pains of Death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* Whence this *impossibility* should arise, perhaps may not appear to every Reader, at the first sight. But if we consider the matter a little more attentively, we shall perceive there was a *twofold* Necessity of our Saviour's Resurrection; the *first* intrinsical, or that which was founded in the nature of the thing; (and this concerns our Saviour's Power, and the Weakness of his Enemies); the *other* extrinsecal, or that which was founded in something else; and this takes in the Divine Decree, and the End or design of the Messiah's Office.

[1.] *First* then, I begin with that which is *intrinsical*, or that Necessity, which is founded in the nature of the thing; and concerns our Saviour's Power, and the Weakness of his Enemies: He too strong to be detained, and They too impotent to hold. That he sub-

SERM. XIV. mitted to death was no effect of neceſſity, but choice. For, as he has expreſly aſſured us, *no man* could *take away his life* from him; *but he laid it down of himſelf.* He could immediately have ſummoned *more than twelve legions of Angels* to his reſcue; or by a ſingle word of his Divine Power, he could have fruſtrated all the plots and machinations of his Enemies, and turned them to their own confuſion. For, being in his nature *Divine* as well as *human*, (that *eternal Word*, by which the heavens and the earth were made at the beginning,) he had all things ſubject to the authority of his command, and liable to be controuled by his ſupreme Will: he was far above the power of thoſe Creatures he had made himſelf; and was no otherwiſe to be annoyed by them, but as he freely ſubmitted to them in the form of man.

From theſe ſame Arguments, which prove it to have been owing to his own conſent, that Death had any power over him at all; it likewiſe follows, that it muſt needs be in his power to reſtrain its dominion, and ſubmit no farther than he pleaſed himſelf. Therefore he adds, *that he had power to lay down his life, and he had power likewiſe to take it up again.* And yet more peremptorily did he tell the *Jews*, if they deſtroyed *the temple of his body*, that *in three days he would raiſe it up.* He promiſes it, we ſee, in his own name, as the effect of his own Power and Authority. Other

ther men are raised by a Power by no means their own; they are restored to life at the command of that Almighty Father, who first gave them Being; and were it not for the intervention of his resistless Word, they must continue for ever in a state of death. But He, whow as God as well as man, (by a mysterious union of an infinite and finite nature in the same Person,) had infinite Ability and Power in himself: He being, as touching his Godhead, of one substance with the Father, could do *all things by the word of his power*; and therefore could not longer be detained in a state of death, than he freely chose and consented to submit to it. SERM. XIV.

And lest we should suppose, he could consent to a final and unalterable submission; let us attend a little to consider, how inconsistent and absurd it is to imagine he could, by any means, suffer that body to putrify and perish, or that soul and body to be finally separated, which were thus personally united to his Divine Nature; how unjust indeed, that he should for ever undergo the Punishment of Sin, who had already made ample Satisfaction for it; nay how improper (I may add) and destructive of the Scheme of our Redemption, that his body should be longer detained in the grave, who had already answered the End of his appearance here; and was thenceforth *to appear in the presence of God for us.* But this last Consideration belongs rather to

SERM. XIV. that other kind of Neceſſity, I mentioned, of our Saviour's Reſurrection, namely,

[2.] *Secondly*, that which was *extrinſecal*, or founded in ſomething elſe; and This takes in the Divine *Decree*; and the End or deſign of the *Meſſiah*'s Office.

The Divine Decree appears ſufficiently, from that remarkable Prediction of the Royal Prophet; *Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thy holy one to ſee corruption.* For as *David* was a Type of *Chriſt*; we find 'tis uſual for him to ſpeak ſuch things, in the firſt perſon, as do neceſſarily belong to the *Meſſiah*; and that too, even when the more immediate occaſion of his Ecſtaſy was ſome Providential Diſpenſation towards himſelf. The reaſon whereof is evidently This: becauſe whilſt under ſuch circumſtances, he conſidered himſelf not ſtrictly in his perſonal capacity, but under the notion of a *Type*; from the contemplation of what he had thus ultimately in view, and the ſpecial direction of the *Holy Ghoſt*, he was many times led to draw ſuch characters, as do properly agree to the Antitype alone.

The *Jews*, 'tis likely, might have ſome warrantable and authentick Traditions; they might have ſtated Commentaries or Expoſitions received among them, to fix and determine the meaning of ſuch Prophecies. From whence we find ſuch application eaſily and often made of them in the *new Teſtament*.

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And tho' we may not have all thoſe helps remaining, which the *Jews* had, to interpret and explain the ſenſe of Scripture; yet we certainly have others, which they had not: and it is a conſideration, which deſerves to have ſome weight with us, that it was ſo underſtood, whilſt thoſe Helps remained. And no doubt it is at leaſt a very good rule, for judging ſuch characters to belong to the Meſſiah; if they could not poſſibly agree to the Speaker *(David)* in his own perſon.

Such then is that Prediction, which I juſt now mentioned. For to uſe St. *Peter*'s argument on this occaſion. *Men and brethren, let me freely ſpeak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his ſepulchre is with us unto this day:* (characters which do but ill accord with the aforeſaid Prophecy, if *David* were himſelf the perſon there intended! for how ſhould he ſo many ages continue in the grave and ſtate of death, who was not to be left in hell, nor his fleſh to ſee corruption?) *Therefore being a Prophet,* (as the Apoſtle goes on) *and knowing that God had ſworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the fleſh, he would raiſe up Chriſt, to ſit on his throne: He ſeeing this before, ſpake of the reſurrection of Chriſt, that his ſoul was not left in hell, neither his fleſh did ſee corruption**. In like manner let us hear St. *Paul*, *For David*,

* Acts ii. 29, 30, 31,

SERM. XIV. ſays he, *after he had ſerved his own generation by the will of God, fell on ſleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and ſaw corruption: But he, whom God raiſed again, ſaw no corruption* *. From all this 'tis obvious to collect the meaning of that famous Prophecy, which, ſince it could not poſſibly belong to *David* in his own perſon, muſt of neceſſity be referred to the *Meſſiah*.

What was thus not obſcurely revealed before, our bleſſed Saviour afterwards more fully confirmed, and more explicitly foretold. From henceforth therefore his Reſurrection became *neceſſary*, as neceſſary as it is God ſhould not lie; but that *all his promiſes* ſhould be *yea and amen*, ſtedfaſt and ſure, and inviolably kept.

Nor was this *Decree* meerly arbitrary (tho' that might ſuffice to ſatisfy and ſilence us) but it had indeed it's foundation in the nature of the thing; ſince the very Deſign of the *Meſſiah*'s Office required his Reſurrection. He came to conquer and ſubdue thoſe enemies, by which Mankind was moſt unhappily enſlaved. But which way could this End have been accompliſhed; if he, who came to conquer, had been ſubdued by death? or how ſhould he have reſcued others, if thus unable to releaſe himſelf? Again, he was not only to make ſatisfaction for our ſins by the Sacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs; but

* Acts. xiii. 36, 37.

likewiſe

likewise to plead the virtue and merit of that Sacrifice by the following oblation or presentation of himself in heaven: (typified of old by the sprinkling of the victims blood under the law:) in the continuance of which oblation consists his most powerful and prevailing Intercession with the Father for us. Lastly, he was likewise to be invested with the Regal Authority, to govern and bestow spiritual gifts upon his Church; to punish the contempt and transgression of his Laws; and to appoint some proper Substitutes as his Vicegerents, to rule as well as to instruct. But before he could receive or exercise this Power from on high, 'twas necessary that he should arise from the dead, and not remain, as to his body, (which is one essential part of his Manhood) in a state of meer insensibility. All which will receive a farther illustration by our attending to the

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(3.) *Third* Consideration proposed upon this Argument, *viz.* the particular Benefits which we receive by our Saviour's Resurrection. St. *Paul*, you see in the Text, sums them up in This, *viz.* the Freedom of the *Elect* from Condemnation: *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again.* Now to shew you, how his Resurrection, as well as Death, was necessary to free the *Elect* from Condemnation; (and indeed does it effectually;) how the Advantage purchased by his Death and Passion had

SERM. XIV. been fruſtrated and loſt, and could never have been conferred on us without his riſing from the dead; how our hopes of life had been but weakly founded, if our Redeemer himſelf had continued ſtill in death and ſilence: In order to ſet all this in a clear light, it will be proper to make theſe three following reflections, *viz.*

[1.] That our Saviour's riſing from the dead was neceſſary, in order to his Aſcenſion into heaven, there to appear in the preſence of God for us.

[2.] That This again was neceſſary, in order to his conferring thoſe Gifts and Graces on his Church, which may enable us to work out our Salvation. And

[3.] That hereby we are encouraged with the lively hopes of Happineſs; thro' that aſſurance, which all this derives to us of our Juſtification and Redemption; and ſo are freed from the Condemnation of our own Conſciences. And

[1.] *Firſt* then, the firſt great and beneficial Conſequence of our Saviour's Reſurrection, and to which That was abſolutely neceſſary, is his Aſcenſion into heaven, there *to appear in the preſence of God for us.* For I omit to mention the forty days of his continuing upon earth, and converſing with his Diſciples; as being rather deſigned for their conſolation and ſupport, and for the clearer proof of his Reſurrection, than being it ſelf any

any beneficial consequence of it to the Church in general. But what is the mighty advantage of his Ascension into heaven, They will easily perceive, who have any due notion of the previous Satisfaction and Merit of his death. SERM. XIV.

For that Propitiation, which he once made upon the cross, he now continually in heaven represents before the Father, and applies to our great Use and Benefit: in like mannner as of old, in the legal Expiations, it was not enough, that the victim had been slain; unless its life were symbolically presented before God by *the sprinkling of the blood.* All this I may shortly, perhaps, have some occasion more fully to illustrate and explain to you. In the mean time it may suffice to observe, that this very beneficial Consequence of our Saviour's Resurrection, is at once an illustrious instance of what I undertook to explain at present, *viz.* the Benefits, which we receive thereby; and likewise a clear proof of the Apostle's argument in this place, that since Christ is risen from the dead, the Elect must be free from Condemnation: to which purpose, we find, he carries it farther in the next words, *who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* For had he not risen from the dead, he could not have *ascended up on high*, to plead the Satisfaction and Merit of his Sufferings, to release them from the Guilt and Punishment of their Offences,

SERM. XIV. fences, and confirm their title to eternal Happineſs. And therefore ſince his Reſurrection was thus neceſſary, in order to his Aſcenſion into heaven, let it be added

[2.] *Secondly*, that to This we owe thoſe Gifts and Graces he from time to time beſtows upon his Church. For tho' he is ſaid to have been *born* a King, and by conſequence to have had a right to his Regal Authority, whilſt he was converſant upon earth; yet ſince 'tis certain, he appeared here rather *in the form of a ſervant*, and did not diſplay himſelf in the grandeur of a Sovereign; for this reaſon it has been uſual to ſpeak of his entrance on the *Regal* Office, as conſequential to his *Reſurrection*. Then is he ſaid to have received *all power in heaven and in earth*, to have been *highly exalted*, and had *a name given* him, *which is above every name*. And then indeed, *he manifeſted forth his glory*, in a manner, which became his Royal Character. *He aſcended* (as the Apoſtle ſhews in the next words) *to the right hand of God*; He had then the Preeminence and Dominion over all creatures; He ſent forth his *Holy Ghoſt* on the Apoſtles, appointed them his Deputies or Subſtitutes on earth; by the miniſtry of them and their ſucceſſors he governs and directs his Church; and will finally, in the conſummation of ages, diſtribute Rewards or Puniſhments *to every man, according as his work ſhall be*. In the accompliſhment of theſe purpoſes prin-

principally consists the activity and efficacy of his *Regal* Office, which he exerted not in this ample manner, 'till after his Resurrection; when God is said to have *set his King upon his holy hill of Sion.* SERM. XIV.

Now, how the exercise of these Powers tends to free the *Elect* from Condemnation, by furnishing them with means and opportunities of *working out their own Salvation*, and at last actually absolving them, is very evident. For those means of Grace, which are afforded us, were designed so to direct our Faith, and to influence our Practice, that we may be *recovered out of the snare of the Devil*, and possessed of the Conditions requisite to entitle us to that Satisfaction and Merit of *Christ*, which was designed to rescue us from Death and Condemnation, and restore us to a happy Immortality. And yet the Necessity of all this being entirely frustrated and defeated, if the great Captain of our Salvation had lain still in the grave, and continued under the Dominion of Death; which had utterly prevented the exercise of his *Regal* Office, nay and the continuance of his *Priestly* Office too, whereby he obtains from God, what by the *Regal* he bestows on men; I say, this Consideration is a plain argument, why we should account these Gifts and Graces among the Benefits of our Saviour's Resurrection, and demand with the Apostle; *Who is he that condemneth*, when *'tis Christ that*

SERM. XIV. *that died, yea rather that is riſen again.* I have only to add now

[3.] *Thirdly*, in the laſt place, that hereby we are encouraged with the lively Hopes of Happineſs thro' that aſſurance, which all this derives to us of our Juſtification and Redemption; and ſo are freed from the Condemnation of our own Conſciences. Was *Chriſt* raiſed from the dead? This is a clear confirmation of the whole Chriſtian Doctrine; inaſmuch as it implies the Divine Power of our Lord, and the concurrence of the Father with him: and how then ſhould we diſpute either his Doctrine or Miſſion, which were both atteſted by Divine Authority? Beſides he had given it for a Sign to his incredulous countrymen, that *as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, ſo ſhould the Son of man be* no more than *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* And therefore, when this ſtupendous Sign was accordingly fulfilled, they could not help concluding (if they would act rationally) that his Doctrine was true, and God had ſet his ſeal to it. It was the apprehenſion the *Jews* had of this conſequence, which made them ſo exceeding cautious to guard againſt any impoſture of this kind. Had they thought it a thing indifferent; they might have left the event to Chance, or to the management of others; they need not have been ſolicitous to prevent the people's being impoſed upon about

about it. But they judged it a matter of the utmost consequence, and which, if suffered to obtain among the people, could not fail to establish and gain credit to the Doctrine of Christ. And therefore they took care to *make the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch.* SERM. XIV.

Again, this Resurrection of *Christ* tends farther to beget in us a lively Hope of Salvation; by acquainting us with the Acceptance and Efficacy of that Sacrifice he offered on the Cross; which cannot fail to comfort us with the assurance of a full and perfect Expiation. For was Christ's death intended as a Sacrifice for Sin? And yet since that Oblation, has God raised him from the dead? From hence we learn, that he has conquered death, and him that has the power of death, *i. e.* the Devil; We learn, that the ransom he paid is accepted of the Father, who after he had humbled him a little, and *made him lower than the Angels, has* thus *crowned him with glory and honour*; and *given him a name which is above every name.*

Lastly, it is moreover a convincing argument of his Intercession, his powerful and prevailing Intercession with the Father for us. For *Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him: for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God, and is now ascended into heaven,* there *to appear in the pre-*

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preſence of God for us. And what mighty Comfort then ſhould we take in this reflection, that our Redeemer liveth; that *he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us*; that he, whom the Father always heareth, is engaged in our behalf; that *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous*, who, whilſt we are employed in his ſervice upon Earth, is pleading continually our cauſe in Heaven? How ſhould it *fill us with all joy and peace in believing, and make us abound in hope, thro' the power of the Holy Ghoſt?* And All this now being conſequential to his Reſurrection; we ſee with what great reaſon St. *Peter* has aſſerted, that God of his abundant Mercy *has begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead:* ſince without That, our Hope muſt have been faint and wavering, or rather, groundleſs and abſurd; we ſhould have had leſs certainty of the revival of our own bodies, and none at all of their being raiſed to glory; whilſt he, who undertook to procure us this Reward of Immortality, ſhould himſelf have been detained in death and ſilence.

But now, ſince that *the Lord is riſen indeed*, and has appeared to many; ſince by his Reſurrection, he is become *the firſt fruits of them that ſlept*; let us draw near with full aſſurance of Faith, not doubting, but that *he, who raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, will alſo quicken our mortal bodies by his ſpirit, that dwelleth in us*;

and make us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, if we be but careful to conform ourselves at present to our Lord's Example by a spiritual Resurrection; if *like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also die unto* our past *sins*, and from henceforth *walk in newness of life. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power:* but they shall be finally admitted to those rivers of Pleasure, which are at God's right hand, and last for evermore; they shall be received into those mansions of eternal Bliss, which *Christ* is gone before to prepare for them in his Father's Kingdom; which he purchased for them at the Price of his Blood, the extensive Merit whereof he continually sets forth at the right hand of God. And this should lead me, in order, to the *Third* thing observable in the Method of our Redemption, *viz. Christ*'s Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the presence of the Father, to plead our cause and intercede in our behalf: *who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* But this must be reserved for the subject of our future Meditations. *Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, henceforth for evermore.* Amen.

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SER-

SERMON XV.

CHRIST's Exaltation *at the* right hand *of* GOD.

ROM. viii. 33, 34.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth:
Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.

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THE SECOND of the Two general Heads, at firſt propoſed, was to explain more particularly the Method of our Redemption, by Chriſt's Death and Reſurrection, and Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the preſence of the Father, and make continual Interceſſion for us.—I have already gone thro' the *Two* firſt Particulars under this Head, *viz. Chriſt's Death* and *Reſurrection*, and proceed next, in order to the

3. *Third*, namely, his Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the preſence of the Father, and *make* for ever *interceſſion for us*. And in That there

there are plainly these *Two* things considera- SERM. ble, *viz.* XV.

1. *Christ*'s Exaltation it self, at the right Hand of God. And,

2. The Intercession he there makes for us.

(1.) *First*, *Christ*'s Exaltation it self at the right Hand of God. Where it will be proper to reflect,

[1.] Upon the *Person* said thus to be exalted.

[2.] Upon the *Place*, to which he is exalted.

[3.] Upon the *Privileges* implied in this his Exaltation. And,

[4.] Upon the *Posture*, in which he is represented.

[1.] *First*, Upon the *Person* said to be exalted, *viz.* our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, referred to in the Text under the relative, *Who*.

It had been long before predicted of him, in the Book of *Psalms*. *The Lord said unto my Lord*, (says *David*) *Sit thou at my right hand**. Which words, however the modern *Jews* would wrest them to *Abraham*, or *David*, or any body indeed, rather than him, to whom they really belong, were yet, by their forefathers, more candidly interpreted, and believed, upon convincing reasons, to refer to the *Messiah*. He, whom *David* in spirit called his Lord, must not only be some person distinct from him, but even superior to him,

* Psal. cx. 1.

SERM. XV. in a ſpiritual ſenſe. And he, who was at once poſſeſſed of *Regal* Authority, and inveſted with eternal *Prieſthood*, (both which we ſhall hereafter perceive to be implied in this Exaltation) could be neither *Abraham*, nor *David*, nor any of the worthies of the *old Teſtament*, or the ſucceeding times to *Chriſt*, in whom thoſe Offices were rarely joined, and, when they were, expired with their lives.

For which reaſon, when our Saviour urged this Text upon the *Phariſees*, to prove the Dignity of the *Meſſiah*; they had no thought of evading his argument, by denying any ſuch meaning of the Text; but were ſo compleatly ſilenced, that not a man of them, *from that day forth, durſt aſk him any more queſtions**. From hence the writers of the *new Teſtament* took this ſenſe of the Prophecy for granted, and thought they had no need to prove, what no body diſputed. And tho' the preſent *Targum* upon the *Pſalms* has otherwiſe explained it; yet That is well known, by learned men, to be a writing of no great Authority; that appeared not till towards the concluſion of the *fourth* century: by which time the *Jews* had their old prejudices confirm'd by new forgeries; when their ſcattered Traditions were collected together, and no doubt enlarged. And yet it may be added, that it has, ſince that, been explained by a celebrated Commentator of the *Jews* themſelves, as clearly pointing out the Kingdom of *Meſſiah* †.

* Mat. xxii. 48. † R. Saadiah Gaon. in Dan. 7. And

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And if thus the Prophecy be allowed to refer to *Chriſt*; there will be no difficulty to prove, that it was accordingly fulfilled in the Event: I ſay, there will be no difficulty in proving This, to them that will accept the teſtimony of credible witneſſes, and believe what is related, in Books ſufficiently atteſted. For that *Chriſt*, after his Reſurrection, did bodily *aſcend into heaven*, and *ſits* there *at the right hand of God*, we are taught in ſo many places of the *new Teſtament*, that the moſt ſuperficial Reader may be able to obſerve them. This is that Exaltation, whereof moſt Interpreters underſtand That of the Apoſtle, that *God has highly exalted him**. This is That Superiority of Glory and Honour, which it has pleaſed the Father to confer upon him, *that in all things he might have the preeminence*.

From hence, however, let no one take occaſion to ſuggeſt unfair prejudices againſt the Catholick Doctrine of our *Lord's Divinity*; by repreſenting it as inconſiſtent with the Nature of God, to admit of Exaltation, and that too by another ſuperior to himſelf; by concluding therefore, that he, who was thus exalted, could not poſſibly be *God over all*; but muſt needs be ſome inferior, created Being. For we do not ſo contend, that he is God, as to forget his being Man. Nor whilſt we aſſert this Unity of his Perſon, do we

* Phil. ii. 9.

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mean to deny the distinction of his Natures. He, who is both God and man, is certainly capable of Exaltation: because, altho' the Godhead be supreme and omnipotent, and consequently can receive no accessions of Honour or Power; yet the nature of man is finite and dependent, and as such must needs be capable of increase or diminution.

We are not of those Hereticks, who suppose his *human* Nature to be absorp'd by the *Divine*, and teach such an absurd mixture or confusion of *both*, as should change the condition and quality of a *finite* creature, into the immense Power and Essence of an *infinite* Creator. But observing and admiring in him, as well the weaknesses of *human* nature, as the essential Attributes of the *Divine*; it is in respect of his *Humanity*, and not of his *Divinity*, that we believe him to have been exalted.

If it should be replied by the Adversaries of the Catholick Faith, that all this is *gratis dictum*, and that we take for granted the very Question in dispute; I answer, that is, because their Objection no way presses us, nor shews us any reason for deserting our Hypothesis. We reckon That distinction to be justly founded on many passages of Scripture; nay, to be the main Foundation of the whole System or Scheme of *Christianity*. Let them convince us of error if they can; and shew wherein we have mistaken those *Oracles of God*, or laboured from thence to propagate the cause of Falshood. In

In the mean time, this Objection will put us in no fear; because it does not drive us to any inconsistency. We shall allow what they object, that God cannot be properly exalted, and that *Christ Jesus* was exalted in his human nature; and yet insist nevertheless, that he is *God over all:* because there is no sort of repugnancy between these Propositions; and therefore no reason to be assigned, why he, who assents to the *one*, should presently give up and disclaim the *other*. He, who was both God and Man, might have new honours conferred on his Humanity; without any reflection on his Divine Power and Excellency, which was incapable of all addition. It was the Body of *Christ*, which his Disciples understood to be exalted; whilst they beheld him with their corporal eyes ascending into heaven, in order to be placed at the right hand of God. Which leads me, in order, to the next, or SERM. XV.

[2] *Second* thing observable, namely, the *Place*, to which he is exalted, *the right hand of God.*

It was the wild conceit of some ancient Hereticks, that the Divine Being is of human shape or figure. Because man is said to have been *created in the image of God*; they presently brought down God to the image of a man; they imagined him to be extended and circumscribed, composed of *matter* and *form*, and possessed of all the parts

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or members of a human body. His *hands* and *eyes* and *ears* they could explain without a figure; whilſt they looked upon him *to be altogether ſuch a one as themſelves*.

Far, Far be ſuch extravagance from us! who have not ſo learnt the Doctrines of *Chriſtianity*, as to be ignorant, that *God is a ſpirit*; and that *a ſpirit hath not fleſh and bones*; that he is moreover ſuch a ſpirit, as can no more be confined, than circumſcribed: but fills heaven and earth with his Divine Preſence; and is not ſo preſent in *one* place, as to be abſent from *another*. *Hands* therefore and *eyes* and *ears* can be no otherwiſe aſcribed to him, than in a figurative and improper ſenſe; to denote ſomething analogous to the offices of thoſe Parts. Thus, becauſe men are often looking upon, and taking care for what they moſt value; therefore is God's eye ſaid to be *over the righteous*, as being thoſe, whom he more eſpecially provides for and defends. So again, becauſe the hand is the inſtrument of work and action; therefore, when the Scripture would illuſtrate the powerful interpoſition of Divine Providence, it borrows the Metaphor from that part, and teaches us, that *the Lord's hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave*. And to the ſame purpoſe, laſtly, becauſe men are willing to hear and attend to the petitions of their Favourites; therefore are God's *ears* ſaid to be *open to their cry*, as being ever ready to hear and anſwer the devout prayers of his Servants. But

But, however from this observation we may derive a proper caution for the explaining of this Article, that whilst *Christ* is said to *sit on the right hand of God*; God may not be understood to have like parts or members with ourselves: yet surely they must be too fond of *Metaphors*, who can from hence conclude, (as some of *Luther*'s Followers) for the Ubiquity or Omnipresence of the Body of *Christ*. They argue (it seems) from hence, that God's Power is properly denoted by his *right hand*; and because his Power is over all his works, and cannot be excluded from any part of the creation; therefore they conclude, that he, who resides at the right hand of his Power, must be every where too*. But who perceives not the weakness and fallacy of this Conclusion? They are the inseparable properties of *Matter* to occupy some *Space*, to have *Parts*, and to be circumscribed. And tho' the condition of glorified Bodies be very different from what we find at present; yet they are still material and finite, and by consequence incapable of Omnipresence and Ubiquity. 'Tis therefore a just matter of our consolation, that our Religion prescribes no such absurdity to be received, as an Article of Faith. Quite contrary, it teaches us, that *Jesus* arose with that same body, which had been laid in the grave; that cloathed with human flesh, his Disciples beheld him ascend-

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* See Limborch. Theol. Christ. l. 3. c. 14. § 28.

SERM XV. ing towards heaven; and that in those heavens, which then received him, he shall continue *till the times of restitution of all things.*

And tho' he be said to *sit at the right hand of God*; yet this can no more conclude him, to be every where at once, in his human nature, than those other passages, where God's eye is said to be *over the righteous*, may be thought to conclude for their Ubiquity. For as well might we argue, that they, who are under the eye of Providence, must needs be in all places where Providence is vigilant; as that he, who sits at the right hand of God, must be in all places, where his Power is exerted. The consequence in both these cases is alike necessary and just, *i. e.* it is by no means just or necessary in either.

Admit then, that by God's *right hand*, his Power is intended, which is active throughout all nature; yet he, who *sits* at his right hand, need not be *omnipresent:* 'tis enough, tho' he can be but in one place at once; if in that place the Divine Power be more conspicuous and manifest. Indeed, they who make Reply, that since God's right hand is every where; therefore wherever Christ is seated, it must be at the right hand of God*; do but trifle with the *Article*, instead of conquering the difficulty. For this is no more than to say, that whatever *is*, must needs be *somewhere*; and supposes every man to be as much

* Limborch. ut supra.

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at the right hand of God, as this *Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus.* But doubtleſs, 'twas the meaning of the Article, and of thoſe paſſages of Scripture upon which it is built, to expreſs a particular Exaltation of the human nature of *Chriſt*; and not to lay down ſuch a general aſſertion, as is true of every thing elſe, as well as him. SERM. XV.

And therefore, to ſpeak my ſenſe freely upon this matter; ſince we find in Scripture, that God is pleaſed to make a more glorious Manifeſtation of himſelf in Heaven, and is therefore repreſented in the *Revelation*, as ſitting on *a throne**, and uſed to be figured out by the glorious Appearance of the *Shechinah* in the *Jewiſh Sanctuary*; and ſince our Lord again aſcended, with his natural body, which was certainly circumſcribed by place, and had both a right hand and a left; I ſee not what ſhould hinder us from taking it thus far literally, that he is placed with his left hand towards this glorious Manifeſtation of the Divinity, and ſo, in no unuſual ſenſe, on the right hand of God.

To confirm which, it may be added, that St. *Stephen*, in his glorious viſion, ſaw him actually in that poſition. *Behold* (ſays he) *I ſee the heavens opened, and the ſon of man ſtanding on the right hand of God*†; *i. e.* on the right ſide of the celeſtial Manifeſtation of Divine Glory. And leſt his words ſhould

* Rev. iv. 2. † Acts vii. 56.

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SERM. XV. be wreſted from their proper and literal, to a figurative meaning; let us hear how St. *Luke*, in the Verſe before, relates the hiſtory; *he looked up* (ſays he) *ſtedfaſtly into heaven, and ſaw the* GLORY OF GOD; which, as it uſed to ſignify the *Shechinah* in the *Jewiſh* Sanctuary; ſo here, without doubt, it means that glorious Manifeſtation of the Divinity in heaven; and *Jeſus ſtanding on the right hand of God, i. e.* of that Glory of God already mentioned. I ſhall detain you no longer upon this Subject, but proceed,

[3.] *Thirdly*, to enquire what Privileges are implied, in this Exaltation of Chriſt at the right hand of God. And they are principally theſe three; *viz. Dignity*, *Power*, and *Acceſs*. And,

(1.) *Firſt* then, it implies *Dignity*. For however the *left hand* might, in ſome nations, be eſteemed the more honourable place; yet among the *Hebrews* we learn, from many inſtances, (and particularly, to name no other, from *Jacob*'s Benediction of the ſons of *Joſeph*) that the *right hand* always had the preference. But whilſt God has raiſed *the man Chriſt Jeſus* above all other creatures, *given him a name which is above every* created *name*, and even *put all things under his feet*; *it is manifeſt* (as the Apoſtle to the *Corinthians* unanſwerably argues) *that he is* himſelf *excepted*, *who* was the Author of this Exaltation, and *did put all*

* Acts vii. 55.

things

things under him. The throne therefore ought to be considered, as the place of greatest Eminence and prime Dignity. After That, the *right hand* is next to be regarded, as superior to the *left*, or any place around it. To which purpose we read, that when King *Solomon* was placed, as supreme upon his throne, he ordered a seat to be provided for his Mother at his right hand, as the place not superior, but immediately next in honour to his own. SERM. XV.

So that when we read of *Christ*, that he is *at the right hand of God*, we are not to understand (with the *Eutychian* Hereticks) that his humanity is converted or absorped, much less made superior to the Divinity; (these are the grossest and most monstrous absurdities —as absurd and monstrous as to put finite for infinite:) but only, that *God has highly exalted him with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour*, and placed him in a station honourable above all others.

'Tis thus, St. *Paul* explains it; that *God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all**. And in like man-

* Eph. i. 20, 21, 22, 23.

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ner St. *Peter* makes it the conſequence of his Aſcenſion into heaven, and being there placed on the right hand of God; I ſay, he makes it the conſequence of this Exaltation, that *Angels and authorities and powers are made ſubject unto him**. They are not only inferior in degree, but ſubject to his command. For beſides, or together with his Dignity, we are to take notice, that this Exaltation of Chriſt implies,

(2.) *Secondly* his *Power*. For as places of dignity and honour are commonly inveſted likewiſe with authority; ſo the right hand of man being uſually the ſtrongeſt, is made a fit emblem of Strength and Power. From whence it comes to paſs, that the moſt ſurprizing Acts of the Divine Omnipotence are ſpoken of in Scripture, as done by the right hand of God. *Thy right hand, O Lord*, (ſays *Moſes) is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath daſhed in pieces the enemy* †. And in like manner the Royal *Pſalmiſt*, *The right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly* ‡. And again, *his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory* ||. So that by this Exaltation to the right hand of God, the *Regal* Office and Authority of the *Meſſiah* is very properly ſet forth and deſcribed; in that he is raiſed to that ſtate of eminence, which may fit the

* 1 Pet. iii. 22. † Exod. xv. 6. ‡ Pſalm cxviii. 16. || xcviii. 1.

exercise of such Authority. *The Father* (says our Saviour) *judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.* And tho' that Text refers to the executing of judgment by the *second* Person of the Trinity, rather than the *first*; yet it means that *second* Person, as united with the Manhood, and so becoming Mediator between God and Man. SERM. XV.

And even in his state of Humiliation, whilst he conversed upon earth; we may observe some manifest tokens of his Royal Character. The Miracles he wrought, tho' belonging rather to his *Prophetical*, than to his *Regal* Office, did yet evidently display his Power; and shewed, that even nature it self was obedient to his word. But after his Resurrection, he more plainly entred upon the actual possession and administration of his Kingdom, in the gift of the *Holy Ghost* the *Comforter*; in governing and presiding over his Church; in commissioning the Apostles and their Successors, as his proper Substitutes; in prescribing Laws for the direction of our Faith and Practice; and in the distribution of Rewards and Punishments; as well at present, in the Censures and Privileges of his Church; as hereafter more notoriously, in the Consummation of ages, and final judgment of Mankind.

I say, this his *Regal* Office and Dignity, is properly expressed by his session at God's right hand. For it becomes him, to whom the chief Power is committed, to fill the Seat

SERM. XV. Seat of Chief Dignity, and come next the Sovereign, from whom his Power is derived. So we read upon *Joseph*'s advancement, (who was, in this respect, a lively Type of *Christ*) that *Pharaoh said unto him, thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou**. And so, in like manner, when the Apostle observes, that the Father of glory had set *Christ Jesus at his own right hand in the heavenly places*; he soon after subjoins, that *he gave him to be head over all things to the Church*†; making this Authority the consequence of that Exaltation.

And thus far then of the *Dignity* and *Power* of *Christ*, which are both considerations that concern his *Regal* Office. I now proceed to the

(3.) *Third* and last Privilege, *viz. Access*, which has relation to his *Priesthood*, in that it denotes the acceptance of his Suit, and the prevalence of his Intercession for us.

The nearer any Person is to him, whose favour he designs to procure, (provided he be but a worthy and fit spokesman) the better prospect he will have of Success. And tho' it be true, that God, as he is omnipresent, could have heard our Saviour's Intercession in any part of the world; yet we may conceive much better hopes of our Cause, when we see this our Spokesman so highly honour-

* Gen. xli. 40. † Eph. i. 20, 22.

ed,

ed, and admitted into the more immediate preſence chamber (as I may ſo ſpeak) of the Divine Majeſty. Accordingly the Scriptures, we find, lay very great ſtreſs on this acceptance of our *High Prieſt*; and deduce very pertinent Inferences of Comfort and Aſſurance from it. *We have* (ſays *one* Apoſtle) *an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous**. And *Chriſt is entred* (ſays *another*) *into heaven itſelf, now to appear in the preſence of God for us* †. And yet more expreſly again, *We have ſuch an High Prieſt, who is ſet on the right hand of the throne of the Majeſty in the heavens* ‡. SERM. XV.

From hence then it appears, that his Interceſſion is not mean or ſervile; that he does not ſupplicate as one doubtful of ſucceſs, or unworthy of the Favour; but as one, who is conſcious of the Father's Goodneſs and readineſs to hear; as one, who has merited the things he aſks, and already enjoys that place of ſupreme Dignity, as the Reward of his Obedience. And from hence therefore we may derive matter of ſolid comfort and conſolation to ourſelves, that our cauſe is pleaded by one of ſuch high Honour and Merit, that we need not be in fear leſt his Suit ſhould be rejected; in whom, whilſt upon earth, the Father declared himſelf to be well pleaſed; and whom, he has aſſured us, by raiſing him to his own right hand, that he will always

* 1 John. ii. 1. † Heb. ix. 24. ‡ Chap. viii. 1.

SERM. XV. hear. All this I shall have occasion to explain farther, when I proceed to speak particularly of our Saviour's *Intercession*.

In the mean time it may be proper to observe, that there is no such inconsistency between this act of the *Priesthood*, and the execution of his *Regal* office, as the *Socinians* pretend. For the objects of these offices are plainly different. His acts, as a *Priest*, are directed immediately to God, they terminate in the appeasing of his Wrath, and procurement of his Favour: In his acts, as a *King*, his subjects only are concerned; They are those wise methods of government, by which he sees it requisite to rule and order them.

There would indeed be some force in the objection, if this *Regal* Power of *Christ*, considered as the Mediator between God and man, (for 'tis in that capacity alone the present question concerns him) were every way absolute and independent. But that can be said of none but the Divine Power. *Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom* was given him by God; It was *He that set his King upon his holy hill of Sion.* But he must not be imagined to have so committed the Government to him, as to abdicate himself. Rather, as the Apostle to the *Corinthians* argues; when God is said to have put all things under him, *it is manifest, that he is* himself *excepted*, who was the Author of his Exaltation, and *did put all things under him**.

* 1 Cor. xv. 27.

From

From whence it is obſervable, that the ſame acts are ſometimes aſcribed to God, and at other times to *Chriſt*; becauſe all the *Regal* acts of *Chriſt as Mediator*, he does by virtue of a power derived or committed to him by the Father. So that by virtue of his *Prieſtly* Office, he propitiates the Divine Majeſty; and by virtue of his *Regal*, he beſtows the Favour of God rendered thus propitious. By the one, he pleads his Merit with the Father, and inclines him to *be favourable and gracious unto Sion:* By the other, he beſtows thoſe Gifts upon his Church, which his powerful Interceſſion has obtained for them. In *that* he acts for men to God, in *this* from God to men; in *both* as a middle Perſon, or the *one Mediator between God and man.* SERM. XV.

Let *Joſeph* in the Court of *Pharaoh* be a lively illuſtration of this matter. He had the government of *Egypt* committed to his care; but yet *Pharaoh* reſerved the ſupremacy to himſelf. Therefore when his Father and his Brethren came down, he acquainted *Pharaoh* with the Caſe; who again referred it to him, to make proviſion for them. He interceded with *Pharaoh* in their behalf, and this not in a ſuppliant and diſtant form, but only by repreſenting their condition and relation to himſelf; and then he acted, and made ſuitable proviſion, by virtue of that authority he had obtained from him.

SERM. XV. Nor does this account of a delegated Power at all derogate from *Chriſt*'s natural and eternal Power and Godhead. For he is conſidered under two very different notions, when we look upon him in reſpect of his Divine Nature, as he is *God over all*; and when we regard him as the *Chriſt* of God, or *Mediator between God and man*. In the former view his Kingdom is not ſubordinate or inferior to another; but he is of one ſubſtance with the Father, the Fountain and Original of all Power, and no way divided from him in Kingdom, in Power and in Glory. In the latter the *human* nature is aſſumed to the *Divine*, which not only *may*, but indeed *muſt* be inferior and ſubordinate.

And tho' there be in him a perſonal Union of theſe two natures; yet that alters not the caſe, ſo long as the natures themſelves remain perfectly diſtinct. His Divine Nature receives no additional Powers, becauſe its Power is already infinite, and ſo incapable of all addition. But it is not ſo with the Humanity; his human nature may have new powers communicated and derived to it from the Holy Trinity.

Let us try if we can diſcover ſome faint reſemblance of this matter in ourſelves. We perceive there is in us a perſonal Union of Soul and Body. The Soul, the mean while, is a ſpiritual active Subſtance, by nature made immortal, and ſo capable of everlaſting Happineſs

pineſs or Miſery. But the body, on the other hand, is material and groſs, and wants to have its preſent frame and conſtitution changed, in order to qualify it for the participation of eternal Rewards or Puniſhments. The perſonal union of theſe two ſubſtances has not confounded them together; but has preſerved the nature and properties of both diſtinct. The body is not now immortal, becauſe the Soul is ſo; nor will the Soul, from the future change of the Body, receive any addition to its own immortality. So, whilſt the *Divine* Nature reſerves its own original Supremacy, the *human* is ſtill limited and dependent, and as ſuch may have a derivative Majeſty conferred upon it; and can indeed have no power or authority, but what is given it from above. And thus far of the Privileges implied in our Saviour's *Exaltation*. It remains for me in the, SERM. XV.

[4.] *Fourth* place, to propoſe ſome Conſiderations concerning the *Poſture*, in which our Lord is repreſented; Which, tho' it be not expreſly mentioned in the Text before us, may yet be eaſily collected from other paſſages of Scripture, where we commonly find him repreſented as SITTING at the right hand of God.

Hereby, ſome have thought his authority as our Judge to be implied; it being the cuſtom of Judges to ſit upon the bench, when they are hearing cauſes, or pronouncing ſentence: or elſe the Aſſurance and Efficacy of

SERM. XV. his Interceſſion, which wants not to be recommended by a humble Poſture; from whence the Author to the *Hebrews* ſeems, in this reſpect, to oppoſe our *High Prieſt* to the Prieſts under the Law; who were bound to expreſſions of lowlineſs and reverence in their miniſtrations: in that there (as he obſerves) *every Prieſt* STOOD *daily miniſtring and offering*; whereas *this man, after he had offered one ſacrifice for ſins, for ever* SAT DOWN *on the right hand of God**.

But tho' ſuch kind of obſervations may be piouſly intended, and, if not rigidly inſiſted on, are no way culpable; yet I would not willingly indulge too great a liberty to ſuch conjectures: becauſe the Scripture it ſelf does not conſtantly and invariably keep to the ſame phraſe in the deſcriptions of this matter. For not only St. *Paul* in the Text, ſays, He IS *at the right hand of God*, without naming any particular Poſture; but St. *Stephen* more particularly names the Poſture of *ſtanding*; *Behold* (ſays he) *I ſee the heavens opened, and the Son of man* STANDING *on the right hand of God*†. Whether *ſitting* then, or *ſtanding*, neither muſt be ſuppoſed conſtant and unalterable; as tho' he were confined to a poſture, and muſt always keep his body in the ſame figure. But from both together, or from either ſeparately, I hope we may have warrant ſufficient to obſerve,

* Heb. x. 11, 12. † Acts vii. 56.

1. The

1. The quiet, and, SERM.
2. The continuance of his government. XV.

And,

(1.) *Firſt*, ſome have thought that *Chriſt*'s ſitting at the right hand of God, implies a perfectly indolent and unactive ſtate; that he has no care of government upon him at preſent; having not yet begun his glorious Reign, nor indeed being like to do ſo, till all his enemies ſhall be perfectly ſubdued*. For thus they would ſtrengthen their argument, by obſerving, that the *Pſalmiſt* repreſents God as making the enemies of *Chriſt* his footſtool, whilſt he only ſate by himſelf as a ſpectator. And ſo they may argue plauſibly enough, who can perſuade themſelves, that *his kingdom is of this world*; and therefore cannot believe it is already begun, ſo long as they ſee no outward ſigns, nor viſible appearance of it.

But one would be really ſurprized to find the like deluſion prevail with others, who allow, nay contend, that his *kingdom is not from hence*, neither cometh with external pomp and obſervation. One would wonder why ſuch men ſhould imagine, that Chriſt never intended to govern his Church by Subſtitutes and Vicegerents; that if he would rule, he ſhould appear in Perſon; and that no man is accountable for his conduct to any but himſelf; that he has not even committed ſuch ſpiritual Powers to his Miniſters, as are

* Vid. Limborch lib. 3. cap. 14. § 27. & cap. 24. § 6.

SERM. XV. not of this world, neither *come with obſervation*; but are ſecretly conveyed by the Operation of the *Holy Ghoſt* concurring with the regular vocation and appointment of them. Theſe are ſuch wild notions, as I am apt to think *Eraſtus* himſelf, the famed Patron of our modern enemies to eccleſiaſtical authority, would have bluſhed to own. They are plainly ſuch, as cut the ſinews of all diſcipline and order, and deſtroy the very being or ſubſiſtence of the Church, as a ſociety.

I have already laid before you ſome proofs of *Chriſt*'s internal and ſpiritual Kingdom; which, tho' not *of* this world, not derived from any human authority, nor ſupporting it ſelf by civil ſanctions; is yet to be upheld or continued *in* this world, by the exerciſe of thoſe myſtical and ſpiritual Powers, which are communicated and given out by *Chriſt* himſelf, whom the Father has appointed our Head and Sovereign. I ſhewed you how his poſſeſſion of his Kingdom is ſufficiently implied by this very Seſſion at the right Hand of God, which ſome have urged as an objection againſt it. And when the Continuance of his Kingdom likewiſe is foretold, that he ſhould *ſit at God's right hand till his enemies be made his footſtool*; This muſt include at leaſt all the time from his Aſcenſion into heaven to the final conqueſt of thoſe enemies. And ſo St. *Paul*, we find, accordingly applies it in his Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*; *He muſt reign*

reign (says he) *'till he hath put all enemies under his feet**; He is not *after that* to begin his reign, but he must reign *'till then.* SERM. XV.

Nay, and this very act of *Regal* Power too (the act of subduing or putting down his enemies) is indifferently ascribed in Scripture either to God or *Christ.* Sometimes God is said to *make his enemies his footstool*; and at other times he is said *to subdue all things to himself.* Which is occasioned partly by the hypostatical union of two natures in him, whereby he is God and man in one person; so that his acts are properly and indeed the acts of God; and partly by that commission he has received as Mediator, whereby his Mediatorial Kingdom is derived from God, and his Authority to exercise such Power subordinate to him. And therefore in that very *Psalm*, where God promises *to make his enemies his footstool*, we find him, in the next verse, saying to the *Messiah*, (which shews him not silent or unactive in the matter,) *The Lord shall send the rod of* THY *strength out of Zion, rule* THOU *in the midst of* thine *enemies*†.

From the *Posture* then, in which our Lord is represented, we are not to imagine that he is perfectly unactive, and has not yet entered upon the Administration of his Kingdom. But yet we may, I think, with good reason conclude, that his reign is quiet and serene,

* 1 Cor. xv. 25. † Psal. cx. 2.

SERM. XV. not oppreſſed with difficulties like the Kingdoms of the earth, nor expoſed to changings or uncertainties: ſo that he need not be travelling from place to place, to ſecure himſelf or his dominion; but may ſafely keep ſtill in his throne, which is immoveable and fixt. For tho' his enemies be *mighty and rage horribly, yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier*, and need be at no expence or trouble to defeat them; but can confound them at his pleaſure with the breath of his mouth.

(2.) *Secondly*, the next thing hereby implied, is the *Continuance* of his Government. For ſitting and ſtanding are Poſtures void of motion, and imply continuance. Now the Scriptures are very full and expreſs for the eternal duration of the *Meſſiah*'s Kingdom; that *of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom**; that the *Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end*†. And in the ſame ſenſe, I judge, we ought to explain thoſe Prophecies, which promiſe the Perpetuity of the Kingdom to the ſeed of *David*; which were no otherwiſe accompliſhed than in this ſpiritual reign of the *Meſſiah*. The ſecular government over the Tribes of *Iſrael* has long ſince been taken from the Family of *David*; and that people ſcat-

* Iſaiah ix. 7. † Luke i. 32, 33.

tered

tered throughout all Kingdoms without any proper distinct Head or Governor. So that those Predictions of Perpetuity can no otherwise be understood than of that promised Seed and Successor of *David*, whose Kingdom is elsewhere declared to be *an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion that which shall not be destroyed.* SERM. XV.

Nay, and since the Church triumphant (whereof he is head) is to endure eternally; it must surely be absurd to suppose his Kingdom and Government should fail, which is to represent the Body as without its Head. Quite contrary, the Scriptures represent it as the utmost of our Hopes and Ambition, that we shall reign with *Christ* hereafter; and teach us, by a necessary consequence, that his Reign shall not first be abrogated. And in the *Revelation*, to the same purpose, we find that *blessing, honour, glory and power*, are ascribed *unto the Lamb for ever and ever** From all which it must appear, that *Christ remaineth a King for ever*, and as *being raised from the dead he dieth no more*, so *being* now *at the right hand of God exalted*, his glory shall sustain no diminution or decrease: neither any cession of his own, nor the will of his Father, nor the malice of his enemies, nor the longest period that can be named, shall ever abolish or conclude his Government.

* Rev. v. 13.

Against

SERM. XV.

Againſt This indeed it is objected, that the *Pſalmiſt* makes mention of his reigning no longer than *till his enemies be made his foot-ſtool. Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footſtool.* Now whatever order be obſerved in conquering the reſt of his enemies, the Devil, Antichriſt and Sin (and if there be any others that come under the ſame Character) yet the Apoſtle ſays expreſly, *the laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed is* DEATH. And when that ſhall be, it is eaſy to reſolve; at the day of general Judgment: when all dead bodies ſhall revive, the wicked ſhall be ſentenced to eternal Miſery, the righteous rewarded with eternal Happineſs, and *death* thereby be *ſwallowed up in victory**. From whence it may be thought, that *Chriſt*'s Reign ſhall laſt no longer than till the conſummation of ages, when he ſhall ſee this final conqueſt and deſtruction of his enemies. For if he only was to reign *till his enemies were made his footſtool*, or ſubdued unto him, and Death, which is the laſt and moſt ſtubborn enemy, ſhall be then entirely vanquiſhed and deſtroyed; it may ſeem to ſome a neceſſary conſequence, that then his Reign ſhall ceaſe with the oppoſition of his enemies, and thoſe preſſing occaſions, which his Church had had for his Favour and Protection.

But however plauſibly this objection may be repreſented to a common Reader; yet they

* 1 Cor. xv. 26, 54.

muſt

must be perfect strangers to the *Hebrew* *Idiom*, and the manifest propriety of Scripture language, who are not sensible that the word *until* is often used only *inclusively* of the time before, and not *exclusively* of that to come. So that it is a good argument of *Christ*'s reigning at present, and till the consummation of ages, (in opposition to the forementioned conceit of his silence and inactivity) but not of his abdicating *then*, or ceasing to govern any longer. Rather the phrase, which follows, implies the contrary. For to what end should *his enemies be made his footstool?* Surely to increase the glory of his Majesty, and not to put an end to it; to raise his Empire to a more flourishing condition, and not to abolish or take it from him. A *footstool*, tho' not honourable in it self, yet adds to the honour of the person it supports, and implies him to be seated on *a throne*. And therefore since *Christ*'s enemies subdued are to be made his footstool; it must be most unreasonable to suppose, that his Empire should conclude with their opposition, when it will but shine forth with more conspicuous lustre. SERM. XV.

There may be greater difficulty in another Passage, in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, which some have thought an unanswerable argument to this purpose. *Then cometh the end* (says the Apostle) *when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority*

SERM. XV. *authority and power. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*.*

From hence some have concluded that *Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom* shall be abrogated, when the end of his Mediation is accomplished; that as he received it by commission from the Father, so he shall surrender it again†. But I think the passages of Scripture before alledged, do sufficiently make out the eternal duration of his Government. And tho' Eternity may be sometimes taken in a more restrained and limited sense; yet there are such circumstances, in some at least of the Authorities above cited, as cannot admit of any limitations. They set forth the same Truth in such diversity of expressions, they place it in such various lights, they not only mention this Kingdom to be eternal, but expresly deny any ending or cessation of it, that not even the Eternity of the Divine Being can be expressed in stronger terms or more significant. And then surely, it must be most unreasonable to understand all this under certain narrow limitations and reserves, without any foundation in the nature of the thing, and moved only by the supposed authority of a single Text, far more intricate in it self, and not to be illustrated by any comparison

* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. † Whitby in Locum & Outram de Sacrif. in fine.

of other paſſages. Every Text, no doubt, is true in the ſenſe the *Holy Ghoſt* intended it. But then that ſenſe is not in all places evident alike. And therefore the more abſtruſe ſhould be explained by ſuch as are more clear and manifeſt. SERM. XV.

Others, again, have attempted to reconcile the ſeeming difference, by diſtinguiſhing between Chriſt's Kingdom, conſidered as the Meſſiah, and as Mediator; and have thought that the former ſhould have no end, but the latter might*. But this, under favour, I conceive to be a diſtinction without a difference; becauſe he is called the *Meſſiah* in the ſame reſpects, and for the ſame reaſons, as he is the *Mediator*, as being anointed to his ſacred Offices, and ſo appointed to mediate between God and men. His Kingdom therefore, as Meſſiah and as Mediator, is the ſame; and it muſt be vain to expect any advantage from ſo groundleſs a diſtinction.

But there are two other ways of accounting for the matter, which ſeem liable to leſs exception. In the firſt place it is certain, that great part of his *Regal* Office ſhall ceaſe of courſe; when he ſhall have ſubdued his enemies, rewarded his ſervants, and done granting thoſe aids and aſſiſtances, which are neceſſary for this ſtate of trial and temptation. Conſequently he may then in ſome ſenſe be ſaid to deliver up his Kingdom, as forbearing

* Limborch lib. 3 cap. 25. § 14.

to

SERM. XV. to execute thoſe parts of his Office, which are proper only for the preſent condition of the Church militant. But ſtill, he may preſide over the glorious members of his Church triumphant; he may head them in their praiſes; he may exert ſuch acts of Government, as we cannot fully underſtand, till we are, our ſelves tranſlated to that ſtate of Glory. This accounts, in ſome meaſure, for the ſurrendry of his Kingdom, without ſuppoſing it to be really aboliſhed.

Or it may be ſaid (which is the other method of ſolution) that by delivering up the Kingdom to the Father, is only meant the referring it to him as Head, and firſt in order; that when once *Chriſt* has ſubdued all things to himſelf, and brought his faithful ſervants to conſummate Glory; they will then be referred up to the Father as his peculium likewiſe, in and thro' *Chriſt*, who is himſelf referred to the ſame Father as his Head. And then, as to that ſubjection or ſubordination of the Son, which the Apoſtle mentions, it is not to be imagined, that any new ſubordination ſhall then commence, which had no exiſtence before; "that (as a late Writer well expreſſes it) "the Son will then be more ſubject than he is now; that his triumphant ſtate "ſhall come ſhort of his militant; and that "he is to decreaſe, when all his ſaints and "ſervants are to increaſe. No: But as he "was always ſubordinate to the Father as a "ſon

" ſon, ſo will he be then alſo," (and that ſub- SERM.
ordination will be more amply diſplayed and XV.
declared,) " when he ſhall have ſubdued all
" enemies, and ſhall bring all his friends with
" him, uniting them by himſelf, the band
" and cement of union with the Father.
" Then ſhall he reign in peace, and of his
" Kingdom ſhall be no end. His Father
" alſo ſhall reign by him and with him, and
" ſhall be acknowledged ſtill as his Head and
" Father to whom he is referred." *

To this purpoſe, he is repreſented, as making together with the Father but one Temple and one Light †, and ſitting on the ſame Throne; and it is accordingly propoſed, as the utmoſt of our hopes and ambition, that *we alſo ſhall reign with him:* which does not ſurely imply that his Reign or Government ſhall be aboliſhed; but rather, that it ſhall ſhine out in greater Splendor, and diſplay it ſelf with more advantage. *To him then, who ſits at the right hand of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore.* Amen.

* Remarks on Dr. Clark's Catech. p. 42, 43.
† Rev. xxi. 22, 23.

SER-

SERMON XVI.

The Design, Manner, *and* Efficacy *of* CHRIST's Intercession.

ROM. viii. 33, 34.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth:
Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

SERM. XVI.

AFTER having formerly dispatched the two first Particulars observable in the method used for our Redemption, as they are suggested to our consideration in the Text, *viz.* the Death and Resurrection of *Christ (It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again).* The order I had proposed to follow, and which the Text likewise suggests, led me in the last place to attend to his Exaltation at the right hand of God, to appear as our Advocate in the presence of the Father, and make continual Intercession for us. And in That, there are plainly these two things considerable, *viz.*

(1.) *Christ*'s

(1.) *Chriſt*'s Exaltation it ſelf, at the right Hand of God. And, SERM. XVI.

(2.) The Interceſſion he there makes for us.

I have already explained the nature of his Exaltation, and the Privileges denoted or implied by it, the Dignity of his Perſon, the Efficacy of his Prieſthood, and the continuance of his Government. And I have guarded likewiſe againſt thoſe miſtakes and hurtful conſequences, which ignorant or malicious men might be led to infer from it. It remains now only for me to proceed, in order

(2.) *Secondly*, more fully to illuſtrate and explain to you the Interceſſion which *Chriſt* makes for us, at God's right Hand. *Who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.* And this, I conceive, will be ſufficiently done, when we have conſidered it, with regard to the *Deſign*, the *Manner*, and the *Efficacy* of it. And,

[1.] *Firſt* then, for the *Deſign* of Chriſt's Interceſſion; That (if we would explain it properly) muſt be the procuring the Divine Favour towards fallen men; and acting in our nature, as our Patron with God. And that it ought to be thus taken properly, is evident; becauſe it is mentioned as a *Sacerdotal* act, or one great part of our Saviour's *Prieſthood.* For *he has* (ſays the Apoſtle) *an unchangeable Prieſthood; wherefore he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him; ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for*

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them: for such an High Priest became us; and so on*.

Now he, who reads the Scriptures with attention, cannot be ignorant, that the *Priestly* Office has God for its Object, and is directed immediately to him. To this purpose the Author to the *Hebrews* is express, that *every High Priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God* †. So that when *Christ Jesus* is mentioned as our *High Priest*, and his *Intercession* as one essential part of his *Priesthood*; it is hereby manifestly implied, that this his Intercession is made *for* men *to* God: and consequently, that it is designed to procure the Favour of God towards us. From whence it is observable, that to *intercede*, and to *accuse*, are used, in Scripture, as contradistinct, opposite Terms; and therefore, as the latter of these signifies, to traduce or impeach one *to*, or *before* another; so the former must signify, in the reverse, to appear as his Advocate or Patron. Nay, and to take off all doubt in this matter, he is expressly distinguished by that Appellation. For *we have an* ADVOCATE *with the Father* (says St. *John*) *Jesus Christ the righteous* ‡.

Now the business of an Advocate is too well known, to admit of any dispute. 'Tis to plead the cause of one party with another; and therefore he, who is our Advocate with

* Heb. vii. 24, 25, 28. † Heb. v. 1. ‡ 1 John ii. 1.

the Father, muſt plead our cauſe before him, in order to procure his Favour and Goodwill towards us. The original word is here indeed the ſame, as is uſed elſewhere of the *Holy Ghoſt*, when he is called the *Paraclete* or *Comforter*. And to him likewiſe the Scriptures have aſcribed a kind of Interceſſion. For of him we find it ſaid, that *he maketh interceſſion for the ſaints*. SERM. XVI.

But ſince one reaſon, why that appellation is given to the *Holy Ghoſt*, ſeems to be his dictating to the Apoſtles, what they ſhould ſay or plead for themſelves, when cited before the Kings or great ones of the Earth, *take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak, for it ſhall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it is not ye that ſpeak, but the ſpirit of your father which ſpeaketh in you**: And ſince one Inſtance of his making Interceſſion for the Saints, is explained in other words, when he is ſaid to *help our infirmities*, or ſuggeſt to true Believers proper matter of Prayer, and ardency in offering it before the Throne of Grace for their own welfare and happineſs: And another Inſtance of his Interceſſion lies in his directing the general petitions of the faithful to the attainment of that ſpecial relief, which he knows to be proper and convenient for them, in which reſpect it is ſaid, that *he that ſearcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the*

* Mat. x. 19, 20.

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And to this purpose it is yet farther observable, that we are directed to ask or pray to the Father in the *Name* of *Christ*; because he is our Patron to appear for us, and no Prayers, but those which he recommends and patronizes, will ever be accepted. So that *Christ*'s Intercession denotes not meerly his good will or affection towards mankind: (That has not God but man for its object; That does not represent him as our Advocate with the Father, which is the plain sense and language of the Scripture:) nor yet is it meerly metaphorical, as the *Socinians* dream, concerning That and his whole Priesthood; who pretend, that he is called our High Priest, our Advocate, our Intercessor, for no other reason than to denote that his Regal Power, by which he bestows the Benefits of Grace and Salvation on his Church, is not

* Rom. viii. 27.

originally

originally in himſelf, but derived to him from another; and is as much owing to that other's conſent, as if it had been actually extorted from him by the moſt pompous Sacrifices and importunate Solicitations. But it muſt mean an actual and proper application to the Father for the acceptance of us and our addreſſes to him; for the full pardon and remiſſion of our Sins; for the admiſſion of us at preſent to the means of Grace, and thereby in the end to everlaſting happineſs. Let this ſuffice to have been ſaid of the nature and *Deſign* of our Saviour's Interceſſion. My next buſineſs muſt be,

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[2.] *Secondly*, to enquire, with all due ſubmiſſion, into the circumſtance and *Manner* of it. And here we muſt take care, that we aſcribe nothing to this gracious Interceſſor, unworthy his Royal Character and high Dignity; no diffidence or doubt of a deſponding mind; no anxious concern, no trouble or uneaſineſs for the ſucceſs of his Suit; no proſtrate body, no expanded hands, no bended knees; nothing but what may perfectly become him, who is a *King* as well as a *Prieſt*; who, as a Prieſt, founded not his Suit upon another's merit, but his own; who is placed at the right hand of God, far above the higheſt of thoſe Orders, in whom ſuch like acts of humility and ſelf-abaſement might be proper and becoming; who, in one word, has the Divine Nature perſonally united with the human,

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and is, as touching his Divinity, equal to the Father, with whom he intercedes. So that *Christ*'s Intercession for us, must imply his acting as our Advocate or Patron, in some manner suitable to the dignity of his Person, and to the previous Merit and Atonement of his Sufferings.

Now this was once every year prefigured under the *Jewish* Oeconomy by the *High Priest*, on the great Day of Expiation: Who entered then into the inmost Sanctuary with the blood (which was the main part) of the Sacrifices he had offer'd, in order to sprinkle it before the Mercy Seat, as in the more immediate presence of God; thereby to represent the Atonement he had made for the Offences of the people. The *High Priest* in this, was but a type of *Christ*, the great *High Priest* of our Profession; who likewise, after he had offer'd up himself our Sacrifice upon the Cross, *entered not into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself* *, (which the inmost Sanctuary of the *Jews* could only serve to figure out) there to present, not his Blood only, but his whole Humanity before God, as the Victim slain already for the Sins of Mankind; and so to recommend both us and our performances to the Divine favour and acceptance, upon account of the Satisfaction and Merit of his Death.

* Heb. ix. 24.

This

This is called, in Scripture, his *offering himſelf to God*, and his *appearing in the preſence of God for us*. And becauſe, in thoſe Heavens, which have thus receiv'd him, he ſhall continue *'till the times of reſtitution of all things*, and *for ever ſit down at the right hand of God*; therefore is it ſaid of him, that *he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us*. SERM. XVI.

His Oblation therefore of himſelf, and his Interceſſion for us, do no otherwiſe differ, than as the beginning and continuance of the ſame act. His Oblation made in Heaven, at the time of his Aſcenſion, was the beginning of his Interceſſion for us; and his Interceſſion is but the continuance of that Oblation. His appearance in the preſence of God, as the Victim before ſlain for our Sins, ſerves fitly to expreſs both the one and the other; ſince 'tis by That repreſentation of the Sacrifice of himſelf, that he continually procures us the benefit of Pardon and Grace.

Whilſt by ſuch his appearance he recommends us and our performances to the favour of God, the acceptance of our Prayers muſt be certainly included. And this again, under the Law, was prefigured by the High Prieſt's offering Incenſe, commonly *without* the Vail, but once a year before the Mercy Seat *within* it; as the ſymbol of the people's Prayers, to render them effectual and acceptable with God.

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That this was the real design of Incense, that it had indeed such analogy to Prayer, may appear,—from King *David*'s desire, that his *prayer might be set forth as incense*;*—from the custom of the people to be praying in their Court, at the same time the Priest, in their name, was burning Incense in the Temple;†—from *much Incense* being said in the *Revelation* to be *offer'd*, together *with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar*; ‖ (which has manifest allusion to the Incense offer'd on the golden Altar by the Priest, under the Jewish Oeconomy;) —nay lastly, (and to put this matter beyond all doubt) from such Odours or Incense being said expressly to be *the prayers of Saints*. Wherefore, (as a learned Author argues to this purpose,) "if the Jewish High Priest "were a type of our High Priest, *Christ* "*Jesus*, if the inmost Sanctuary figured out "the highest Heaven, and the sacred In-"cense, the Prayers of the Saints: It can-"not be otherwise, but that the High Priest "of the Jews offering to God That Incense "in the inmost Sanctuary, must prefigure "our High Priest now in Heaven, recom-"mending to God the Prayers of the Chris-"tian Church. ‡

For this reason are we directed to come to God by *Christ*; we are taught, that *no man can come to the Father but by him*; we

* Psal. cxli. 2. † Luk. i. 10. ‖ Rev. viii. 3.

‡ Vid. Outram. de Sacrif. lib. 2. cap. 7. §. 4.

are

are exhorted to offer up our Prayers only in his name, as expecting no otherwiſe, to be accepted, but thro' the benefit of his Merits and Interceſſion for us. Which leads me to the SERM. XVI.

[3.] *Third* and laſt thing propoſed to be conſider'd, under this head, namely, the *Efficacy* of our Saviour's Interceſſion.

In this reſpect we find a wide difference between him and the Advocates or Patrons upon earth. For while he intercedes for Man with God, he pleads no dubious cauſe, h fears no contrary event; but being " moſt " high in the glory of God the Father," and having already paid the price of our Redemption, he has only to repreſent the ſatisfaction he has made, and is ever certain of ſucceſs, ever ſure to be heard. At his firſt entrance on his Miniſtry, behold! how his Father with a glorious voice declared him his *beloved Son, in whom he was well pleaſed.* And after his Reſurrection, when he had conquer'd Death and Hell, and made ſatisfaction for the Sins of men; behold! how *God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour*, and thereby teſtified his acceptance of him as our *Prieſt*, when he thus appointed him to be our *King*. For ſince his *Interceſſion* is nothing elſe but his *appearing in the preſence of God*, as the victim ſlain for us; and ſince upon his firſt making that appearance, God placed him at his own right hand; what elſe can we infer

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from hence, but the success of his Suit, and the *Efficacy* of that Intercession, which he makes for us?

I know but one Objection to be made with any colour of reason; and that is, the universality of our Redemption. For that *Christ* died a Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole world, is so plainly testified in holy Writ, that it cannot be denied, without shameful negligence in consulting the Scriptures, or manifest violence and distorsion in explaining them. And therefore, if his present Intercession be a representation of that Sacrafice before God, and of the Satisfaction he has thereby made for the Sins of the whole world; from hence it seems to follow, that either all mankind shall be saved by him, or else his Intercession has not that Efficacy it has been said to have.

But this Difficulty will be easily removed, when 'tis consider'd that *Christ* died, and consequently intercedes for all; not absolutely; but upon certain terms and conditions. He died and intercedes for all, sufficiently to procure them the offers of Grace and Salvation; so that if they perish, the defect is not in him, but in themselves; there is nothing wanting on his part, to bring all men to be saved. They, who embrace the opportunities afforded them, they find by experience the mighty Power and Efficacy of their Saviour's Intercession. But they who instead

inſtead of this refuſe to comply; as they have not the benefit from it, ſo neither are they abſolutely and ſtrictly included within the deſign of it: ſince his Interceſſion extends to all, only upon condition of ſuch compliance; and therefore has it's intended Efficacy, in ſaving ſuch as do accordingly comply. For which reaſon we find him ſometimes repreſented, as interceding only for ſuch. SERM. XVI.

Thus St. *Paul*, in the Text, is manifeſtly ſpeaking of the Privileges of *the Elect*, or ſuch as anſwer the end of their high Calling; in contradiſtinction to all ſuch as are left under the curſe and condemnation of the Law: being either not receiv'd into the Church; or at leaſt forfeiting their Privilege, by *naming* only *the name of Chriſt*, without *departing from iniquity*. And in like manner, in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, he repreſents this Interceſſion of *Chriſt*, as made for *Them* (by way of emphaſis) *that come unto God by him*; i. e. ſuch as depend upon his Merits and mediation for them; ſuch as in confidence thereof apply to God for mercy only in and thro' him; and are from thence encouraged with chearfulneſs to obſerve the Terms which are requir'd of them. All which reſtriction or limitation of his Interceſſion ariſes evidently from hence; that tho' he intercedes for all conditionally (and indeed ſufficiently as to his own part, there being no defect of merit in him, nor backwardneſs in

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in God to accept) yet it is eventually and in effect for none but men of this character; who complying with the gracious Terms of his prevailing Intercession, are manifestly entitled to the Benefits and Privileges of it. And with respect to such indeed, the mighty Prevalence and Efficacy of it is abundantly attested. *Wherefore he is able* (says the Author to the *Hebrews*) to *save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them* *. From hence he promises us success in our addresses to God, and gives us assurance, that *whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name* (or upon the account of his Mediation) *he will give it us.* †

Not that even the best of men are to expect their Prayers should be always answer'd in kind! He who knows our wants, much better than we can ourselves, must be best able to judge what is fit to be granted us, and what not. And therefore St. *John* has added a proper limitation in this matter, that *this is the confidence we have in him*, that *if we ask any thing* ACCORDING TO HIS WILL *he heareth us.* ‡

But then the denial of improper requests, such as are not made according to his Will, proceeds not from any rejection of our Prayers, nor from any want of interest in our Pa-

* Heb. vii. 25. † Joh. xv. 16. Chap. xvi. 23.
‡ Joh. v. 14.

tron

tron to promote the Cauſe of his clients; but is indeed conſiſtent with thoſe Petitions themſelves: ſince good men's Prayers are always made with a reſerv'd ſubmiſſion to the Will of God; and ſue for nothing, any otherwiſe, than as it ſhall ſeem proper or expedient to his Godly Wiſdom. Accordingly they are directed to better purpoſes than we can ask or think, by the ſecret energy of the *Holy Ghoſt*, that Divine Comforter, who is ever aſſiſting to the Prayers of faithful men, and (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) *maketh interceſſion for them, with groanings which cannot be utter'd.* * SERM. XVI.

And thus, I have conſider'd the Doctrine of our Saviour's *Interceſſion*, with regard to the *Deſign*, the *Manner*, and the *Efficacy* of it. I have ſhewn you, how it is the continual repreſentation of the Chriſtian Sacrifice before God, in order to procure his Favour towards man; which it does accordingly to all thoſe, who comply with the Terms, upon which that Favour is deſir'd. I muſt crave your attention yet a little longer, whilſt I make ſome brief application of this Matter to ourſelves. And

1. *Firſt* then, let us ſtand ſtill a while, to admire here the goodneſs of Almighty God, in making ſuch proviſion for us, and admitting us to plead with him (as it were) by Proxy. It is not uſual (we know) in

* Rom. viii. 27.

earthly

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earthly Courts, for men of mean rank to apply themselves in person without ceremony to their Prince; but to get their Petition or themselves presented to him, by the hand of some person of superior Quality. Now whatever might be the Privilege of mankind in the state of Innocence; yet polluted as we are with Sin, we could not, with any confidence, presume to approach the presence of that God, who is of *purer eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look upon Iniquity*, without the Interposition and Mediation of another. In this miserable condition, whilst we lay involv'd, void of all power to support ourselves, and destitute of succour from abroad, it was an unspeakable instance of the Divine Goodness, that he, whom we had offended, should himself provide the means of our deliverance; and by an unconceivable union of the Divine and human nature in one Person, should find out a fit Spokesman or Mediator, to intercede and make Atonement for us.

2. *Secondly*, since this Intercession of *Christ* is but the representation of that Sacrifice he made for Sin; from hence it may appear, that there is none but he can properly intercede for us; because there is no other besides him, that has first died and given himself for us. *There is one* (says the Apostle) i. e. *there is* but one *Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*, who *gave*

gave himſelf a Ranſom for us all. The foundation of his Mediation or Interceſſion with the Father, is that *Ranſom* he has given for all. And therefore all others, wanting that foundation, do want, in reality, the very thing, which ſhould qualify them for ſuch Mediation. Good men indeed may offer up their Prayers, and ſo in ſome ſenſe intercede for us; and ſo perhaps may Angels and departed Saints. To which purpoſe we are all required *to make Interceſſion for all men*, and eſpecially for ſuch as *are in authority*. But then there is a wide difference between the word thus applied to *us*, and as 'tis uſed of *Chriſt*. We pray for one another, not in our own names; but in the name of *Chriſt*; So that *our* Interceſſions are reſolv'd ultimately into *his*, and 'tis only by virtue of his Interceſſion, we can expect to have our own, or other mens accepted. From hence therefore SERM. XVI.

3. *Thirdly*, we perceive the reaſon why the Church directs us to offer up our Prayers thro' *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord:* becauſe we are not fit to approach theDivine Preſence in our own name, nor may hope to have any of our Petitions accepted from ourſelves; but only as they are offer'd up for us by this powerful Interceſſor. *Him the Father* always *heareth*; and if we deſire to be heard, we ſhould be ſure to make our requeſt *in his name*, and get them preſented by him; we ſhould

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should be always conscious of our own unworthiness, and rely wholly upon his Merit and Mediation, who is most worthy to be heard and to be accepted. Thus whilst our Petitions are offer'd up *thro'* Christ, they are moreover offer'd *by* him; he undertakes our cause, and presents them before God: it being one part of his Intercession (as already explain'd) to recommend or patronize the devout Prayers of his Church.

4. *Fourthly*, seeing we have now such an *High Priest* to intercede for us, by *appearing* always *in the presence of God*, who has declared his approbation and acceptance of him, by placing him at his own right hand; let us advance boldly to the throne of Grace, and entertain an humble trust and confidence in his Merits, who *is able to save us to the uttermost*. Had we nothing to depend on, but our own worthiness; most just it would be in us, to despair for ever of Pardon and Salvation. For what reparation can we ever make to the Divine Justice, for our past violations of the Law of God? What security can we pretend to give for better Obedience in the time to come? That Corruption of nature, which has formerly betray'd us into breaches of our Duty, will still render us incapable of perfect Obedience for the future, and of making satisfaction for our past defects. But when we reflect 'tis *Christ* who pleads our cause, who first died for our Redemption, and by virtue

tue of the Sacrifice then made for Sin, continues ſtill his Interceſſion for us; what ſhall we deſpair of gaining, who have ſuch a powerful Patron, ſuch an Advocate and Guide? We may ſurely expect to be heard, and to obtain our Suit; when this highly exalted Prince and Saviour takes upon himſelf to recommend us and our addreſſes both. If we be all Frailty and Unworthineſs; yet *he* is all Merit and Sufficiency: and ſince we ſee his Merit teſtified by his Exaltation to the higheſt Glory; from this Honour, which is done our Interceſſor, we ſhould be encouraged with the fulleſt aſſurance of Succeſs, the moſt lively hopes of Pardon and Acceptance. Only in the,

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5. *Fifth* place, it ought to be remembered, that ſince this his Interceſſion is not abſolute, but conditional, and requires in us an Evangelical Obedience, or conformity to the Precepts of the Goſpel; we muſt all take care we fruſtrate not, as to our ſelves, nor hinder the gracious Effects of this his loving kindneſs towards us. We are none of us excluded, or ſhut out from his Favour. The Benefits of it are propoſed to us all, without exception. But if we will exclude our ſelves, we have none but our ſelves to thank for the miſeries that follow. The cauſe is wholly from our own preſumption or ſtupidity, not from any defect on the part of our Redeemer; as tho' he wanted Acceptance with the

SERM. XVI. Father, or were not *able to save*; but meerly from our own refusal to comply with those equitable Terms; upon which Salvation is offered us, and an Interest in that Intercession, which is made by *Christ*.

Let us then no longer be our own enemies, nor render that Mediation, which in it self is all-sufficient, insignificant to us. But let us be perswaded to be happy for *Christ's sake*, who has done and suffered so very much for *ours*. Let us *search the Scriptures* diligently; in which, we know, we have *eternal life*. From thence, as from a certain Rule, let us derive such Christian Principles, as may suffice to govern the whole course of our actions, and keep us steady in the ways of Righteousness and Peace. Let us be always diligent to order our practice suitably to such Principles: and because we are not sufficient for these things of our selves; let us apply to him for assistance, who alone is able to support us, and chearfully make use of all those means of Grace, he has appointed in his Church. Above all,

6. *Sixthly*, and in the last place, let us duly frequent the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and expect the Benefits of our Saviour's Intercession, in a more especial manner, to be there conveyed. There have we *Christ*'s crucified Body represented and set forth, as the Victim slain for the offences of Mankind. There do we beseech the *Fa-*

ther, thro' the Merits of the *Son*; and ſo, as no where elſe, we ſhew forth the Sacrifice he made for us. We behold his Body broken, and his Blood ſhed for our Sins; we not only *remember* in our own minds, but we repreſent or make a ſolemn *Memorial* before God, of his Sufferings upon the Croſs; and ſo, in the juſt ſenſe of that Paſſage of St. *Paul*, we *do ſhew forth the Lord's death, till he come.* So that this myſterious action of the Prieſt on earth, is but the lively emblem of the Function executed by our great *High Prieſt* in heaven: and whilſt we worthily celebrate this holy Myſtery, we do indeed concur with our Saviour's Interceſſion, which conſiſts, as I have ſhewn, in the Repreſentation of That Sacrifice he made for Sin; in the Oblation and Preſentation of himſelf before the Father, as the Victim ſlain for us. SERM. XVI.

Nor need we therefore doubt, whilſt we receive the ſacred Symbols with our mouths, but that all the Benefits of our Saviour's Interceſſion are therewith conveyed; provided the inward act of lively Faith do but accompany the outward act of oral Manducation; provided whilſt we eat and drink the bodily elements, the external ſigns or ſymbols, our minds be kept intent upon the thing ſignified, the ſpiritual deſign or meaning, and made to apprehend thoſe Benefits of *Chriſt*'s Death, which are abſent and inviſible to ſenſe. For then have we conveyed the full Pardon and

SERM. XVI. Forgiveness of our Sins; we then have new Supplies of Grace for future amendment, and a sure principle of happy Immortality: It being our Saviour's express promise to all, who do worthily and effectually communicate; *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

To Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XVII.

The Privilege of Christian Liberty *explained.*

GAL. v. 13, 14, 15.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

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THE *Galatians*, or *Gallogrecians*, (so called for their descent from a Colony of the *Gauls* settling in *Greece*,) had, by the preaching of St. *Paul*, been converted to the Faith of *Christ*. After which, there were certain *Judaizing* Teachers, who took the advantage of his absence, and by insisting on the necessity of Circumcision, and other ritual Observances appointed by the Law; and even pretending his Authority for what they said, did so far *bewitch* these new Converts, and cast such a mist before their eyes, that they kept not to the Truth of the Gospel, but

SERM. XVII. *desired again to be in bondage to those weak and beggarly elements*, from which the Son of God had come to redeem and set them free.

From hence, the Apostle found it necessary, not only to vindicate his former Doctrine, as communicated to him by immediate Revelation, and no way suggesting the continuance or obligation of the *Mosaick* Law; but likewise to back it with unanswerable arguments, that he might the easier recover them from that servitude, into which they had declined; and prevail with them to *stand fast in* that *liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free.*

There was only this danger in the case; that mistaking the Privilege he had so strenuously asserted, they should imagine themselves liable to no restraints of Law, and instead of Liberty, should run into the most extravagant Licentiousness. This is, of the two, a baser and more abject kind of Slavery; to be *the servants of corruption*, as St. *Peter* expresses it: and therefore our Apostle took care to let them know, that between these two there lay a nobler and more generous kind of Servitude; so far from being destructive of their *Christian Liberty*, that it was indeed perfective of it, and the only safe course they could steer between those dangerous extremes.

This is the purport of those words, which I have read to you for the Text; from whence I shall be led to consider,

I. The

I. The Privilege or Benefit of *Christians*, which by their Religion they receive; and that is our *Christian Liberty:* for brethren, ye have been called unto *Liberty.* SERM. XVII.

II. The abuse of that invaluable Privilege, forbidden in these words: *only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.*

III. The right way to exercise it, *viz.* with Charity: *But by love serve one another.* And this last he enforces by a *twofold* argument; the *first* of which is drawn from the Excellency and Benefit of such Charity; *for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self:* the *other* from the mischief of the contrary; *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

I. FIRST, the great Privilege or Benefit of *Christians*, which by their Religion they receive; and that is our *Christian Liberty:* For Brethren, ye have been called unto *Liberty.*

And this now being the Privilege, which the Author of our Salvation has procured for us, will be best explained by stating those several burdens, which he came to remove, and set us free from: And these are, the burden of *Oppression*, by usurped Authority; the burden of *Duty*, by the proper Lawgiver; and the burden of *Punishment*; upon Defect of our Obedience.

SERM. XVII. 1. *First* then, the first instance of our *Christian Liberty*, is the Freedom we enjoy from the Tyranny and Oppression of usurped Authority. The Devil, when he had drawn in Mankind to be partakers of his Crime, in disobeying the Law and Commandment of their God, set up a sort of rival Kingdom in opposition to his Maker; and challenged the Obedience of the human Race, as captives and subjects to it. Their understanding was darkened by thick mists of Error: and tho' they got a new sense of Guilt and Shame, which belongs not to the innocent; yet they lost that relish of Virtue and Integrity; that solidity of Judgment, and clearness of Perception; that Aid and Succour of Divine Illumition, which were necessary to secure them against mistake. They contracted moreover a most stubborn crookedness and depravity of Will: having once broken the Command, they became perfectly averse to it; and instead of the Image of God, which had been stamped upon them, they bore the likeness of the Prince of darkness. Or had their Will been less stubborn and perverse; yet lastly, they wanted even the power to do well: the poison of Sin had such malignant influence, that it destroyed those great abilities with which they were created; and forfeiting the communications of the Divine Spirit, did utterly disqualify them for the discharge of that Obedience, which might denominate them the Chil-

Children or the Subjects of God. I need hardly add to this, by what arts the grand Apostate has endeavour'd to establish, and secure his Kingdom: How by ambiguous Oracles he has amused the World, and set up himself for the object of their Adoration; how, as *the God of this world*, he has blinded and perverted the minds of such as have submitted to him; how, *as a roaring Lion*, he walketh up and down continually, in search of whom he may devour.

This empire now of Sin, and Satan, the Scriptures represent as the most wretched Slavery and Bondage, *Whosoever committeth Sin*, says our Saviour, *is the servant of Sin.** And they who indulge themselves in all manner of licentiousness, are in St. *Peter*'s language, *the servants of corruption*; *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.* † For this reason are they said to be *taken captive by the Devil*, and *led away with divers lusts:* and they, who are recover'd from this lamentable Apostacy, are said to be turned *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*; ‡ to be deliver'd *from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son*; * to be rescued, lastly, *from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the children of God.* ‖

* Joh. viii. 34. † 2 Pet. ii. 19. ‡ Act. xxvi. 18.
* Col. i. 13. ‖ Rom. viii. 21.

This

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This then is one main branch of *Chriſti-an Liberty*, that *the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus*, does, in this ſenſe, *free us from the law of Sin**. Our bleſſed Saviour has ſo brought *life and immortality to light by* his *Goſpel*; he has given us ſo clear a Revelation of his Will; ſuch notice of our Duty, and ſuch motives to obſerve it; and he has appointed likewiſe ſuch a ſucceſſion of Preachers, to inculcate and explain it; that *that* ignorance, in which Satan had uſed to detain his Captives, can no longer be pleaded in excuſe of our ſubjection to him, ſince this *light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt hath ſhined unto us*. And as thus, by his *Prophetical* Office, he has enlightned our Underſtandings; ſo likewiſe, by his *Prieſtly* and *Regal*, he has ſanctified our Wills; he has made ſuch ſatisfaction for the guilt of Sin; he has procured ſuch ſupplies of Grace, to kill and mortify it in us; he has preſcribed ſuch Ordinances in his Church, for the conveyance of thoſe rich ſupplies, for wiping off the ſtain of paſt Offences, and ſecuring us the better, againſt future Diſobedience; he has gain'd us ſuch free acceſs and admittance to the preſence of God, to beg for growth and improvement in all Grace and Virtue; he ever lives himſelf to make ſuch Interceſſion for us, and ſo to help our infirmities with the aid and aſſiſtance of his bleſſed Spirit; that however we may be impotent by Nature, and *ſold under Sin*, we

* Rom. viii. 2.

are

are yet mighty and powerful by Grace, and *able to do all things thro' Christ, which strengtheneth us.* Henceforth there is nothing to obstruct our *Liberty*, but our own stubborn refusal to accept of it. And if we will obstinately remain under confinement, when we might be rescued from the Chains which have confined us; this can be no exception to *that Liberty*, which *Christ* has purchased; since he has freed us from all necessary restraints, and that which now detains us, is voluntarily chosen and affected by us. SERM. XVII.

The absolute conquest and extirpation of Sin, so as to have no seeds of Impurity remaining, no corruptions of Nature to disorder and solicit us; this indeed is such a state of perfect Freedom, as is no way suited to our present mortal Condition; but expected as the consummation of our Liberty in the Life to come; when our Christian privileges shall be made compleat, and we shall reach to *the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* At present, it is a glorious Privilege, that we can break off the usurped empire and tyranny of Sin; that we can keep it from *reigning* or having dominion *in our mortal body*, tho' we cannot perfectly expel it thence, nor advance to a state of spotless and unsinning Purity. This is in the Scripture language to be *free from Sin*, to be no longer galled under it's yoak, nor brought in bondage to it. It rescues us from the slavery with

SERM. XVII. with which we were oppreſs'd; and is as an Earneſt down in hand, of that more perfect Liberty, when we ſhall compleatly overcome the oppoſition that is made us, and finally triumph over all our Enemies.

Being thus made free from ſin, we become the ſervants of righteouſneſs. *. The condition of our nature will neither admit of Sovereignty nor Independency; but of neceſſity we muſt ſubmit ourſelves to ſome Maſter: *and to whom we yield ourſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants we are, to whom we obey; whether of ſin unto death; or of obedience unto righteouſneſs.* †

Nor does this ſubjection by any means deſtroy the notion of *Liberty*. For the liberty of a Creature conſiſts not in a total exemption from all kind of reſtraint; but in a ſubjection to That only, which is ſuitable to it's nature; and a freedom from all ſuch as is unreaſonable and abſurd. However ſlaviſh it may be to be aw'd by popular Tumults, or oppreſs'd by Tyrants and Uſurpers; yet it is the ſureſt mark of Liberty to ſubmit to the government of wholſome Laws, and the wiſe adminiſtration of the proper Magiſtrate. Juſt ſo, when we ſubmit to Satan and his inſtruments; when we dethrone our Reaſon, and ſet Paſſion in it's room, we are then in a ſtate of ſpiritual Bondage; we invert the very order of our Nature, and are brought under the power of a lawleſs Uſurpation.

* Rom. vi. 18. † Ver. 16.

But if we give up our selves to be govern'd by the Laws of God; if our Affections be no otherwise suffer'd to influence the Will, than as they are directed by Reason, and That is farther enlighten'd and inform'd by Revelation; such service as this, is our most perfect Freedom, it is most agreeable to the condition of our Nature; it preserves our Faculties in their due Subordination, and renders Obedience to our proper Sovereign. SERM. XVII.

This therefore is that *Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*: and tho' it is not to be doubted, but before his Incarnation, the Church had such communications of Divine Grace, as might greatly help it's members to mortify Sin, and to increase in Virtue; yet both their Knowledge was less, and their Assistance weaker; and whatever spiritual Privileges they enjoy'd, it was not by virtue of the Mosaick Despensation, as distinguish'd from the Gospel, but only as it prepared the way, and stood allied to it; it was in virtue of the Promise made of this all powerful Messiah, to repair the injuries done to Mankind by the subtile devices of the grand Apostate, and rescue them from his outragious Tyranny. Nay, and let me add it, as the

2. *Second* instance of our Liberty, that those Ritual Observances are now abolish'd; and as we are freed from the burthen of *Oppression* by usurp'd authority; so likewise from some

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some burthen of *Duty*, by the proper Lawgiver. It was observ'd before, that our Liberty consists not in an absolute freedom from restraint, but in a regular subjection to wholsome Laws impos'd upon us by competent Authority. And therefore it is not to be conceiv'd! that *Christ*, when he purchased us this glorious Liberty, should have taken off the obligation of those Laws, in the Obedience to which our Liberty consists. But when we remember, that the Church had other Laws before his coming; namely, certain typical and ritual Institutions, not possess'd of any intrinsick Worth or Goodness; so many in their number, that 'twas difficult to observe, and yet so rigorously exacted, that 'twas dangerous to neglect them: when all this is consider'd, it will be easy to conclude, that besides *that* Duty, in the exercise whereof consists our truest Liberty; there was moreover a yoak or burthen of Duty, which wanted to be remov'd; and which, whilst it continued, was a mark of Servitude. The inward act of Obedience was always good and acceptable, and extended alike to every part of Duty: but the outward observation of particular Rites and Ceremonies, did not necessarily arise out of that Principle of Obedience; but only as they were required by a positive Command.

The ceremonial Law, no doubt, as every thing that comes from God, was founded in the

the highest Wisdom; and admirably fitted for the use and advantage of that People, to whom it was prescribed. Their genius was low and earthy; and therefore most likely to be affected by a sensible and pompous Worship: and tho' there might be some danger of their resting in such outward Forms; yet there was due provision made against this consequence, by the instruction of Prophets, to raise their minds from those ritual appearances, to what was absent and invisible: It was moreover wisely order'd, that Mankind should be convinced of their impotence, and inability for perfect Obedience, by a Law, which required the most exact conformity to every punctilo; and supply'd no other remedy for their failures and defects, but such as by their need of frequent repetition, did amply testifie their own insufficiency to that purpose. Lastly, this Law was in such manner contriv'd, that it pointed out beforehand the Offices or Characters of the Messiah; and thereby prepared it's diligent observers for the readier knowledge of his Person, and reception of his Doctrine. SERM. XVII.

But all these reasons, being purely temporary, the Institutions which were founded thereupon, must be mutable in themselves. And therefore however they might be necessary for a time, and suited to the occasions of the Church; yet we ought to esteem it as no mean Privilege, no despicable branch of Christian

SERM. XVII. Christian Liberty, that these *old things are done away* in *Christ*, and the term of their Obligation is long since expired: since Men's understandings have ripen'd to a juster sense of spiritual and eternal things, 'twas fit they should be taken off from those *weak and beggarly elements*, and taught a more *reasonable service*; such as was better suited to their rational Nature, enlighten'd by the clearest Revelation, and assisted by Grace. When they saw their natural infirmity, and the impossibility of rendering perfect Obedience, without any defect; the Law had it's End in that particular, and it was time to be deliver'd from that *yoak*, *which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.* *

Once more, when the Messiah made his personal Appearance, to *bring in everlasting righteousness*, or justification *by one perfect Sacrifice of himself*, it was then time for the legal Sacrifices and Oblations to cease, as of no longer use; it was most reasonable for us to let go those shadows, and embrace the substance.

I might appeal to many passages of the *old Testament*, as well as *new*, to prove, that the Law of the *Messiah* was to free us from that yoak of ritual Observances, which *Moses* had ordain'd. And therefore when *Christ* tells us, that he came *not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it*; we understand him not to teach

* Act. xv. 10.

the

the continuance of that outward Discipline, which both he and his Apostles, concurring with those former Writings, had declared should cease; but only his execution and enforcement of *that* Will of God, which is contain'd in the Law, and not subject to any alteration. With him *there is no variableness nor shadow of turning*; and therefore his Will must be immutable and fix'd. But it is no argument of change in him, that he should in such manner prescribe or abrogate certain positive Institutions, as might suit best with the different circumstances of Times and Persons; and uniformly carry on those general designs of his Law, which are of universal and eternal Obligation. SERM. XVII.

When therefore our Lord and Saviour, the holy and ever blessed *Jesus*, took upon him to discharge the Offices of the Messiah, he not only fulfill'd the *moral* Law of *Moses*, (which deriv'd not it's first obligation from *his* appointment, but was founded in the immutable Nature of God, and Reason of things,) by renewing and enforcing it in every part; but even the *ceremonial* too, by doing that in verity, which the Levitical Institutions could only serve to figure out; by teaching and prescribing no other Doctrine or Laws, but what *Moses* and the *Prophets* had foretold he should prescribe and teach; by requiring that inward Purity and Renovation of mind, of which the *Mosaick* Shadows were meant to

SERM. XVII. be outward Signs or Expreſſions. Thus has *Chriſt* releaſed us from that heavy yoak, not by *deſtroying* the Law, but by *fulfilling* it; by anſwering it's end or deſign, and not ſuffering one tittle of what was purpoſed by it to deceive or fail.

And let no one then object, that this is to place our Liberty in freedom from a yoak, to which we never have been ſubject. For the Church of God is to be conſider'd as one Body or Society of Men throughout all ages, tho' in different ſtations, and capacities. During the time of the Law, it was in it's ſtate of Non-age and Minority, and like *the heir who differs nothing from a ſervant, tho' he be lord of all*, was put into the hands of *Tutors and Governors*, and ſubject to the cenſure of a *Schoolmaſter*. It was guided by external Rites and Ceremonies, and (as it were) led by the hand to the Knowledge and Doctrine of the Meſſiah. But when *Chriſt* appear'd in Perſon, it reached it's ſtate of Maturity and Manhood; it was no longer to be fed with the Milk, or taught the Rudiments, of Children, but allow'd a more generous and eaſy diſcipline; as the Heir, when he is come to age, and intruſted with the management of his Eſtate. This therefore is another inſtance of that *Liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free*; Us namely, who are members of the Church, and as ſuch, were formerly ſubject to a ceremonial

al yoak, which is now remov'd and taken off from us. It remains for me, SERM. XVII.

3. *Thirdly*, to consider it in respect of that burthen of *Punishment*, which was to be inflicted in defect of our Obedience. From the beginning of the Creation, the penalty annex'd to the Transgression of the Law was *death*; — an utter exclusion from the favour of God; — a forfeiture of those Privileges, which were design'd us in the State of Innocence; — and subjection to eternal Misery. The Law of *Moses* was so far from rescuing from this sentence of Death, that it rather shew'd how unavoidably we were exposed to it; it added strength and pungency to that *Sin*, which is *the sting* of death; it shew'd us how far we had fallen short of our Duty, and how just was the Vengeance we incur'd.

The Sins of Pride or Presumption, which were done in direct defiance of that Law, it punished with certain Death: and if it allow'd of Commutations in less aggravated Cases; if it accepted of Atonements for legal Pollutions, or the slips of human Frailty; yet the nature of the Sacrifices it prescribed was such, as shew'd they could have no Virtue of their own to expiate the guilt of Sin, however they restored the Sinner to external Privileges; but must, without some farther Expiation, leave him still liable to the Vengeance of God. For what proportion is there

SERM. XVII. between the Sin of a Man, and the Life of a Beaſt? or how ſhou'd it be imagin'd, that the blood of Bulls and Goats ſhould blot out the Tranſgreſſions of reaſonable Creatures, and prevail with the righteous Judge of all the Earth, for Pardon and Forgiveneſs?

But when *the Lamb of God* appear'd to *take away the Sins of the world*; when the ſecond Perſon of the eternal and ever bleſſed Trinity took on him the form of a Servant; and came in the likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, to avert that Vengeance which was due to us, by ſuffering in our ſtead; he quickly *proclaim'd deliverance to the captives* of Satan; he purchaſed us ſuch perfect Liberty, and ſo ſurely reſcued us from that Puniſhment, to which the Law expoſed us, *that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus*; who by being made a Curſe and Sin for them, has taken away the Curſe of the Law.

'Tis true, as the conqueſt of Sin cannot in this life be compleat and abſolute; ſo neither is our exemption from Puniſhment total and entire. The Weakneſſes of human nature are too many to be concealed; and too evidently owing to our firſt Parents Diſobedience, to eſcape being conſidered under the notion of Puniſhment. They are oftentimes increaſed and multiplied by the repeated Tranſgreſſions and Wickedneſs of men. They bring us at laſt down to the Chambers of Death, and cauſe an utter ſeparation between Soul

Soul and Body. Here then is the unhappy fruit of the Apoſtacy of man! Here is the execution of that primary ſentence againſt Sin: *for in the day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die!* And were there no Advantage to be made by theſe Infelicities of nature, were we always to remain under that ſentence of Death; then vain indeed would be our boaſting of *Chriſtian Liberty*; whilſt we received the hire of Slaves, and bore the ſureſt marks of the moſt woful Bondage. SERM. XVII.

But when we remember, that the Evils we at preſent ſuffer, are but the Trials of our Virtue, and *made to work together for good to them that love God*; that even Death itſelf is to them the Gate of Life, and opens them an entrance into endleſs Felicity; this ſhews how *Chriſt* has freed us from the Puniſhment of Sin, and excites us to cry out with the Apoſtle, *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory? The ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Whilſt our ſtruggling and conflict with Sin endures, it is no wonder if we feel ſome of the effects of Sin; if we ſuſtain ſome part of the Puniſhment denounced againſt it. But when we ſhall be delivered from this body of Death, when our ſtate of Trial ſhall be over, and *this mortal* ſhall *put on immortality*; *then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is writ-*

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ten, Death is ſwallowed up in victory; then ſhall we be releaſed at once from Sin and Miſery, and enjoy without intermiſſion thoſe *rivers of pleaſure*, which are *at God's right hand*, and laſt *for evermore*.

So that what was ſaid before of the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, in reſpect of the *Goſpel*, may here be repeated of the preſent Condition of the Church, in compariſon of that *glory which ſhall hereafter be revealed*; that it is now in its ſtate of Non-age and Minority, *we ſee* but *in part*, and we enjoy in part; but when it reaches to its ſtate of Perfection and Maturity, then ſhall the Happineſs of its Members be compleat, and *that which is in part* only *ſhall be done away*. The Privileges however, which we enjoy at preſent, are an encouraging earneſt of this future Felicity; and inſtead of that *Spirit of bondage*, which would ingenerate a Principle of Fear, they ſupply us with *the Spirit of adoption*, and beget in us a hope full of Immortality.

Thus under *Three* Particulars, I have explained to you the nature of that Liberty, which is mentioned in the Text, as the great Privilege or Benefit of our Religion; *for brethren ye have been called unto liberty*. From hence learn we in the,

1. *Firſt* place, to be duly thankful to the Author of this great Salvation, who has thus *delivered us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*. The change

change of the Shadows and the Ceremonies of the Law, for that Truth and Substance, which we perceive under the Gospel, is a Privilege greatly to be valued; as calling us to a Service more reasonable in itself, and more easy to us, as well as conducing to our greater improvement. But it demands our gratitude in a higher degree, that the Slavery of Sin is broken and abolished; that the faculties of our Minds, which had been shamefully inverted, are restored to their proper regiment and subordination to each other; that our Understanding is enlightened and taught the loveliness of Virtue, our Affections directed and disposed to Good, and our Will invigorated from above, and enabled to proceed accordingly: that finally, we are released from the Punishment of Sin, and if we have not yet attained *the end of our faith*, we have however a sure prospect of eternal Salvation, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

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2. *Secondly*, let us be careful to assert and maintain this glorious Privilege, to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. If the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.* But whilst he offers this Freedom as a Privilege, he will never impose it as a Burden; he will not support us in it whether we will or no; but if we chuse to relapse into our former Bondage; we must e'en wear the Chains we have so rashly taken

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up, and be content with ſuch wages as our Maſter gives. It is not our admiſſion to the outward Privileges of the Church of *Chriſt*, which will ſet us free from the uſurped Empire and Tyranny of Sin; unleſs we be careful to apply them to thoſe ſpiritual Purpoſes for which they were deſigned: that as we have *named the name of Chriſt*, we may likewiſe *depart from all iniquity*; that *being made free from ſin, we may become the ſervants of righteouſneſs*; and even *he that thinketh he ſtandeth*, may yet be cautious and circumſpect, and *take* good *heed* to himſelf, *leſt* at any time *he* ſhould hereafter *fall*.

3. *Thirdly*, let us more eſpecially beware, that we miſtake not the nature of this *Chriſtian Liberty*; nor under pretence of exemption from Servitude, ſhake off the Obligation of thoſe Laws, which are enacted by a competent Authority, whether in Eccleſiaſtical or Civil Matters; much leſs refuſe our Obedience to the Laws of God, and reckon all the Tyes of Duty to be cancelled and diſſolved. For this would moſt effectually deſtroy *that Liberty* we pretend to aſſert, and which has been ſhewn to conſiſt in the reaſonable Service of our Maker, and Subjection to his Laws. It would really bring us into that Bondage we pretend to diſclaim; and under the notion of Liberty or Freedom from it, would render us the very *ſervants of corruption*. But theſe conſiderations do more

more properly relate to that *Abuſe* of this invaluable Privilege, which is forbidden by the Apoſtle in theſe words, *only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh.* That was what I propoſed for the SECOND general Head of my Diſcourſe; but muſt now be reſerved to ſome other opportunity. SERM. XVII.

To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XVIII.

The Abuſes *of* Chriſtian Liberty *expoſed.*

GAL. v. 13, 14, 15.

For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh, but by love ſerve one another.

For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not conſumed one of another.

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SUCH is the temper and diſpoſition of fallen and degenerate man, ſo ready are we at invention of any thing that is ſinful, ſo prone is our genius, ſo ſtrong our biaſs and propenſion to ill, that how excellently ſoever all things are contrived by the great Author of the univerſe, and how ſubſervient ſoever to good purpoſes; one way or other, we find means to pervert the gracious Deſign of them, and turn them to what ſhape we pleaſe. Thus the beſt of things have been abuſed; God's *Word* has been conſtrued to ſerve ſiniſter deſigns; and his *Grace* has been turned

into

into laſciviouſneſs: Chriſt's Death has been urged as a reaſon for Security, his Religion has been made *a cloak of Maliciouſneſs*, and Reformation has been pleaded in excuſe of Schiſm. SERM. XVIII.

No wonder then, if Liberty among the reſt ſhould be abuſed, a thing ſo eaſily perverted; and when perverted, ſo indulgent to all ſorts of Wickedneſs. Againſt this St. *Peter* cautions us when he ſays, we ſhould be—*as free, and not uſing our liberty as a cloak of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants of God**. And St. *Paul*, to the ſame purpoſe, in the Text adviſes, that we *uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh*, *i. e.* that we pretend not Liberty, when we follow the courſe of our own fleſhly Luſts and malicious Appetite; that we turn not *the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs* (as St. *Jude* expreſſes it †,) nor *Chriſtian Liberty* into unchriſtian Licentiouſneſs. This therefore; after having already explained to you in a former Diſcourſe the nature of this Chriſtian Privilege, that it conſiſts, not only in a Freedom from the ceremonial Inſtitutions of the Law of *Moſes*; but likewiſe from the Tyranny of Sin and Satan; from the preſent Slavery of their Dominion, and from future Puniſhment: This, will properly follow in the enſuing Diſcourſe, as the Subject of the

II. SECOND General Head I had propoſed, namely the *Abuſe* of that invaluable Privilege,

* 1 Pet. ii. 16. † Jude ver. 4.

which

SERM. XVIII. which the Apoſtle has forbidden us in theſe words, *only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh.*

Now as Virtue is determined by the *Moraliſts* to lie in the middle between two extremes; ſo this Doctrine of *Liberty* is liable to be abuſed in two methods widely different, either in exceſs or defect. The former is the more uſual and more dangerous Abuſe, which runs men into many extravagancies, and under pretence of Liberty, would introduce the utmoſt Diſorder. But the,

1. *Firſt* inſtance I ſhall mention, belongs rather to the other claſs, and would abridge our Liberty, by impoſing that burden of external and ritual Obſervances, which our moſt merciful Redeemer came to relieve and abrogate. There was a time, upon the firſt Publication of the Goſpel, whilſt the *Jews* were indulged in the obſervance of thoſe Rites, to which their education had attached them; and in this they were complied with by ſome who were duly ſenſible, that the obligation to them had ceaſed. *Timothy* was circumciſed by St. *Paul*, as being the ſon of a *Jeweſs*, tho' his father were a *Greek* *. And the Apoſtle purified himſelf as men under a vow, to give proof, that *he walked orderly and kept the law* †. But as for the *Gentiles which believed*, they were directed to obſerve no ſuch thing; except only in thoſe inſtances, which were thought

* Acts xvi. 1, 3. † Chap. xxi. 26.

to be prescribed before the Law, and given to the Sons of *Noah*. And therefore when St. *Paul* had *Titus* with him at *Jerusalem*, who was a *Gentile* Convert, and not sprung from the *Jews*; neither he, nor the Men of reputation with whom he consulted, compelled him to be circumcised, or obey the ritual Injunctions of the Law of *Moses*. ‡ SERM. XVIII.

Much less were any allow'd to consider them as necessary in themselves, or any real cause of justification before God. And therefore, if any insisted upon such necessity, that *except they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved*, * they are called *false brethren* by the Apostle, *who came to spy out the liberty which they had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring them into bondage*† For which reason when St. *Peter*, by his doubling and dissimulation in this matter, gave but too much countenance to that Opinion; he was openly contradicted by St. *Paul*, and censured for his Practice. ‡ Nay when the *Galatians* were submitting themselves to the bondage of these *weak and beggarly elements*; the Apostle was in fear, that *the labour* he had *bestowed* upon them, wou'd be all *in vain*; ‖ and declared that if they were circumcised under this notion of it's necessity, *Christ should profit them nothing*.* The reason was evident, because their sub-

‡ Gal. ii. 1, 2, 3, * Acts xv. 1. † Gal. ii. 4. ‡ Vers. 11, &c. ‖ iv. 9, 11. * v. 2, &c.

mission

SERM. XVIII. miſſion to that Rite was a virtual engagement for the Obſervance of the whole Law. And if they fell ſhort of their Engagement, they had no reaſon to complain that they fell ſhort of Pardon: They had choſen this method of Juſtification by the Law; and thereby they had fallen from the Grace of Chriſt, and ſought not to be juſtified thro' Faith in him.

From this abolition then of the *Moſaick* Ceremonies, it is eaſy to collect, that the Worſhip of the Goſpel was to be pure and rational: and whilſt theſe ancient Rites were done away for want of an intrinſick Worth and Goodneſs; 'twould be abſurd to think there ſhould any new ones be appointed in their room, of the ſame uſeleſs and unprofitable nature. Inſtead of the Letter and outward Form of ceremonial Worſhip, there ſucceeds a more ſpiritual and reaſonable Service; conſiſting principally of that inward Change and Diſpoſition of mind, which thoſe outward Ceremonies did but faintly expreſs or figure out. If therefore there be any under this purer Diſpenſation, who require our Obedience to the *Moſaick* or other Ceremonies ordain'd by Men, in ſuch number or manner, as to weaken the Goſpel, and obſcure it's force; to abate the power of it's ſpiritual Precepts, and transfer our regard from the inward Life and Spirit of Religion, to outward Pomp, and Oſtentation; if they ſhall inſiſt

upon them, as necessary in themselves; or SERM. suppose any end of Religion to be serv'd by a XVIII. meer external observance, or regard to them; these Men become abusers of our *Christian* Freedom, by lessening and abridging it; and like those *Judaizers* already mention'd at *Jerusalem*, they come to *spy out our liberty*, and strive to *bring us into bondage*.

The Offences of the Church of *Rome*, in this particular, are so gross and obvious that 'tis difficult to forbear the application. To those idolatrous Rites, which are directly, and in themselves unlawful, they have added such a multitude of other Ceremonies, as cannot but exceedingly take off from the real Energy and Power of Religion; and yet they insist on them, with such rigorous exactness, as if the whole Life and Spirit of Religion lay in them. So that whilst these things are the principal matter of their care and study, *Christianity* is almost dwindled, among them, into Farce and Foppery; *the Jewish* yoak is aggravated, or made heavier by them, and *the word of God* it self *is made of none effect by their Traditions*. And yet, if these are to be blamed, as offenders against *Christian Liberty*, for this stiff and tenacious adherence to unnecessary Rites; *Those* are no less culpable in the

2. *Second* place, who by an inconsistent zeal for *Liberty*, would stretch their Privilege beyond it's real design, and refuse to observe those

SERM. XVIII. thoſe ſolemn Forms and Uſages, which for the ſake of decency and order, have been deliberately ſettled by a competent Authority. There is no leſs Superſtition, no leſs Reſtraint of Liberty in a ſtiff oppoſition to all ſorts of Ceremonies, than there is in the over valuing and undue manner of preſcribing them.

Whatever Inferences may be drawn from the Abolition of the ceremonial Law, for the Unlawfulneſs of ſuch Obſervances, as either in their tendency or number do cheriſh Superſtition, and obſcure Goſpel Truths; yet this can never amount to an excluſion of all external Rites and Ceremenies in Divine Worſhip. Alas! this is impoſſible; the Principles of *Matter* and *Form* require, that our Bodies ſhould be in ſome poſture; and the nature of a publick Aſſembly implies the neceſſity of *Time* and *Place* for our aſſembling together. Or if the thing were poſſible, yet the importance of Divine Worſhip, requires Reverence from each particular Perſon, and Uniformity in the whole Congregation; that with *one mouth*, as well as *one heart*, in Voice and Body, as well as Soul and Spirit, we may ſet forth the Praiſes, or implore the Favour of our God.

It would be but an odd commendation of the Goſpel, to ſuppoſe, that all the outward beauty of Holineſs were ſet aſide by it; and that beſides that fervor of mind, which is inviſible,

viſible, it retains nothing of that appearing Grace and Comelineſs, which might endear and recommend it. Nay, that very fervor of mind would be liable to juſt ſuſpicions, which ſhould burn all within, and not break out in ſuch expreſſions of Reverence and Devotion, as might atteſt or give witneſs to it's Sincerity. SERM. XVIII.

But we need not argue only from the Reaſon of the Caſe. Our bleſſed Saviour, by making ſuch difference of Perſons, as nature had not made; by chooſing ſome out from among the reſt, to bear Office in his Church, and miniſter in holy Things; by appointing the uſe of *Water* with a certain *Form* of words, for the incorporation of new Members into his myſtical Body; by preſcribing the Elements of *Bread* and *Wine*, to be offer'd and conſumed in memory of his Death, until his coming again: I ſay, he has hereby taught us, it could never be his meaning, that all *ritual* Religion ſhould be entirely aboliſh'd; but rather, that ſomething of this kind was neceſſary to the conſtitution and continuance of his Church.

And tho' he proceeded not minutely to deſcribe, what geſture or habits, time or place, ſhould be uſed for publick Worſhip; yet we find it afterwards among the Precepts of the new Revelation, that *all things ſhould be done decently and in order*, and *to edification:* From whence it evidently follows,

SERM. XVIII. that the Honour of Religion is to be conſulted, and the Advantage of it's Votaries; by the preference of ſome outward Uſages before others, and the performance of our Worſhip, in ſuch manner as may beſt ſuit the nature of the thing, and as well *aſſiſt* our Devotion, as expreſs and recommend it.

Our opinion of theſe Matters, is ſo ſubject to change and alteration, that 'twould be unreaſonable to expect any conſtant and immutable Rule to ſettle and determine 'em. That which is moſt decent and comely in one Age or Country, may happen to be moſt ſlovenly and indecent in another. *Proſtration* was, of old, the Cuſtom of the *Eaſt*; but I greatly ſuſpect, if any ſhould uſe it among us, 'twould loſe much of that Decency and Reverence it was then thought to expreſs.

For this reaſon, however, the obſervance of ſome Ceremonies may be neceſſarily included in the notion of publick Worſhip; yet the Apoſtles have no where tyed us down to ſuch particular Ceremonies, but have only couched our Duty under general Rules; not leaving it to every one to act as his own humour directs: (That would create Confuſion inſtead of Uniformity;) but referring it to the Biſhops and Governors of the Church, to conſider the different circumſtances of time and place, and reſolve upon ſuch ſtated Rites and Ceremonies, as in their judgment ſhall be moſt conducing to Order and to Edification.

If

If they ſhould chance to be miſtaken in their Judgment, and preſcribe ſuch Uſages as are leſs convenient; yet ſtill if there be nothing in them ſinful, or involving thoſe who obſerve them, in the breach of ſome Law; the Error is entirely their own: and it is our Duty to ſubmit and acquieſce; as preferring the publick Peace and Order of the Church, to any other Expediency that can be propoſed. This is, among other things, included in that general Precept, to *obey them that have the rule over us*, and to *ſubmit ourſelves*; which implies, that *Chriſt* has certain Subſtitutes in his Kingdom, to govern in his abſence, whom the reſt of his ſubjects are bound in Duty to obſerve, as inveſted with his Authority. SERM. XVIII.

And however it may be ſaid of each particular Ceremony, whilſt undetermin'd, that it is perfectly indifferent, and has nothing in it's own nature to demand our Obſervance; yet when once it is ſettled by ſuch competent Authority, the *uſe* of it becomes neceſſary, in point of Obedience; and it is no branch of *Chriſtian Liberty*, to ſet us free from Obligations ſo much to our advantage.

But we may the leſs wonder, if the name of *Liberty* be thus abuſed, when 'tis remember'd,

3. *Thirdly*, that this has been ſometimes the pretence for diſclaiming the right of civil Authority; for taking away all diſtinction of Orders and Degrees; for cancelling the Rights

SERM. XVIII. and Properties of Men, and ſetting all upon a level; or even for deſtroying out of the World, the enemies of the Lord; and beſtowing the Earth, as the inheritance of the Saints, under the ſole Guidance and Command of *Jeſus*.

There was, we find, a miſchiveous Error, which very early crept into the Church; and perhaps owed it's original to the falſe expectations of the *Jews*, from their Meſſiah; that the Diſciples of *Chriſt* were free from the Reſtraints of Government; no longer bound to pay Obedience to thoſe Maſters, whom they ſerv'd before their Converſion, but releaſed from all their Obligations and Engagements. On the contrary, it had been taught by *Jeſus*, that his Kingdom is not of this World; that it had no ſecular Views, nor ſought to ſupport it ſelf by the Arm of Fleſh; and therefore could have no occaſion to erect it's glory upon the ruins of the Kingdoms of the Earth. This his Apoſtles afterwards found it neceſſary, more largely to inculcate and enforce; *that as many ſervants as were under the yoak*, ſhould *count their own maſters worthy of all honour*: and even if thoſe Maſters were believers themſelves, they ſhould not therefore *deſpiſe them*, under the notion of *Brethren*, or Perſons made equal to 'em in *Chriſt*; *but rather do 'em ſervice, becauſe they were faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefits*

nefit: * that tho' 'tis true, *Christ*, by his Religion, had made them *free*; yet they should not *use their Liberty, for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God*; continuing still to *honour all men, to love the brotherhood, to fear God, and honour the king*; to submit to him as *supreme*, and to those subordinate *governors* that were *sent by him*; to be *subject to their masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward*;† —that they should *render unto all their dues; tribute to whom tribute was due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour*;‡ and *every man* (in short,) *abide in the same calling wherein he was called*, ‖ or at first converted to the Faith of *Christ*; so that even tho' converted in a state of Servitude, he should not care or be greatly solicitous about it. SERM. XVIII.

By all this, they manifestly taught 'em, that their conversion to Christianity dissolved not any of their civil Ties and Obligations: but they were to look upon themselves as subject to the same Laws and Discipline in civil Matters after their Conversion, as they had been before; for that Christianity aim'd not at the subversion of States or alteration of Property; but left Men in these respects to their former Constitutions, and the future discretion of their Governors. And therefore if any Man should teach otherwise, and advance any

* 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. † 1 Pet. ii. 13, &c. ‡ Rom. xiii. 7.
‖ 1 Cor. vii. 20.

SERM. XVIII. frantick ſcheme of Liberty, in oppoſition to this, the Apoſtle declares him to be *proud, knowing nothing, but doting about queſtions and ſtrifes of words, whereof cometh envy, ſtrife, railings, evil ſurmiſings, perverſe diſputings of men of corrupt minds, and deſtitute of the truth, ſuppoſing that gain is godlineſs.* *

When therefore we ſee the ſame Principles reviv'd by modern *Levellers*, *Anabaptiſts*, *Fifth-monarchy Men*, and ſuch like wild *Enthuſiaſts*; the ſame pretences to Liberty, and the Privilege of Saints; or perhaps a little enlarged with profeſſions of ſubmitting to *King Jeſus*, and to no one elſe; we have the ſame reply to make, which was made of old by the Apoſtles of *Chriſt*, to the firſt Patrons of ſuch abominable Errors; that the Chriſtian Religion aims not to confound the Rights of Men, and overturn the Governments of the World; but rather to eſtabliſh them upon a ſure and laſting Baſis, by requiring *ſubjection* of it's Votaries, *not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake.*

And indeed to aim at the Diſſolution of all civil Government, is ſuch a wild and fantaſtick ſcheme of Liberty, as wou'd render every Man a Tyrant over others, or a Slave under them. The *Hebrew* Commonwealth was never ſo diſorder'd, as in thoſe times of Confuſion, *when there was no king in Iſrael*; but every Man was left to purſue the Follies of his own Imagination, and *do what was right in*

* 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.

his

his own eyes. There is such extravagance and malice in the Hearts of Men, as all the Restraints of Government are found little enough to keep in order: and should we then give up the only security we have against them, and for fear of a generous Subjection to those, who would protect and defend us, put on the most galling yoak of Slavery, under them who would ruin and destroy us? SERM. XVIII.

There can be little hopes of success, when we are arguing with them, who are spur'd on by such Enthusiastick notions, as were not built in the Original, upon any rational deductions; but form'd only in the imagination of a crazy Brain, and supported by some wild prospects of advantage from them. But it may have this good effect, to convince Men of cooler Heads, and more solid Judgments, of the folly and extravagance of their proceedings. And yet if their notions be foolish and extravagant, and an intolerable abuse of *Christian Liberty*; what shall we then say to those abandon'd Libertines, who have the assurance in the

4. *Fourth* place, to plead this Privilege, as an exemption even from the Laws of God; who pretend that *Christ* has so compleatly satisfied the rigour of the Law, as to leave his *Elect* liable to no restraints, nor chargeable with any enormities; and from thence infer the most absolute and uncontroul'd license to execute the dictates of their own Will, with-

SERM. XVIII. out regard to any rules of Duty, or terrors of a future Puniſhment?

This is the moſt dangerous *abuſe* of *Liberty*, that can poſſibly be made; and againſt it the Apoſtles found it neceſſary to provide with the utmoſt diligence and caution. To this end, they inſtruct us, that our Chriſtian Freedom is ſo far from diſſolving the Obligation of virtuous and good Laws, that it binds them cloſer down upon us, and even conſiſts in our imitating the Divine Perfections, and yielding our ſelves *the ſervants of righteouſneſs*. Whilſt therefore we diſclaim, "that ſervice which is perfect freedom," of courſe we forfeit our Liberty under the notion of ſecuring it, we become the Vaſſals of Satan, and Servants of Corruption.

This is That *abuſe* which St. *Paul* more particularly aim'd at in the words of the Text, when he cautions us againſt uſing this Liberty *for an occaſion to the fleſh*. Accordingly he proceeds to take notice, in the Verſes following, how the rational Principle is ſometimes oppreſs'd and overruled, by the luſtings of the Fleſh, or carnal Appetite; how *the works of the fleſh* do moſt widely ſeparate us from the Love of God, and will therefore exclude us from the Glories of his Kingdom; how 'tis the buſineſs of the *Chriſtian Religion*, to ſet us free from the entanglement and influence of ſo noxious a Principle, to *crucifie the fleſh with the affections and luſts*, to enable us to bring forth that *fruit of*

the spirit, which will not expose us to the censure of any Law; and in the possession whereof, for that very reason, we should place our truest Liberty. SERM. XVIII.

'Tis true indeed, that between Vice and Virtue, there is a certain middle space, of an indifferent nature, in which we may fitly indulge ourselves a decent Liberty. Thus particularly with respect to those good Creatures, which the Divine Providence has appointed for the Sustenance of Man; we know that God has given us a Charter of Freedom to make use of them, not only for necessity but delight: that tho' we are forbidden such exorbitant use of them, as would consume too much of our Time, impair our Health, or render us unfit for the Duties of our Station; yet we are not confined to such a scanty Portion, as would just answer the necessities of Nature; but are allow'd, within a moderate compass, even to gratifie our Senses, and make them minister to our delight and satisfaction. But if we go beyond that moderate compass, and decline to Vice in either extream, 'twill be in vain to plead our Christian Privilege in excuse of our Enormity: since we have no license granted us for such Excesses; nor can be guilty of them, whilst we contain ourselves within the Rules of Liberty.

Nay, farther, since the utmost Boundaries of *that* Liberty cannot, with any exactness, be stated

SERM. XVIII. ſtated and determin'd, ſo as to ſay, *hitherto* may'ſt thou come, *and no farther*, to name which is the firſt glaſs that leads to Drunkenneſs, or which the firſt morſel that denominates Men Gluttons; it will highly become us to ſet bounds to our ſelves; to make ſure that we never go farther than we ought, by not going ſo far indeed as we are ſure we might: to be extreamly cautious (*i. e.*) of venturing too near the edge of Liberty; and chooſe rather to deny ourſelves ſome part of it, than run the hazard of exceeding it. The chief end which Nature propoſes by our Food, is the health and refreſhment of the Body. To theſe therefore, ſhould we have a principal regard, and not too wantonly ſtudy to gratify the Palate, leſt we run at laſt to Luxury, if not to Exceſs.

Nor let us think, when we keep clear from all vicious Indulgences, that we have no other Reſtriction to obſerve, in the exerciſe of Chriſtian Liberty. For,

5. *Fifthly*, it is the laſt Abuſe I ſhall mention of that high Privilege, when 'tis alledged for the uſe or practice of ſuch things as, tho' lawful in themſelves, do yet become the occaſion of Scandal or Offence to others. It is, no doubt, an error in the other extreme, and an unreaſonable abridgment of Chriſtian Liberty, for any to reproach or cenſure us as ſinners, upon the account of ſuch things as are allowable. And therefore it is an ex-

cellent Rule, which is preſcribed by the Apoſtle, in the caſe of meats, that as *he that eateth* ought *not to deſpiſe him that eateth not*; ſo *neither* ſhould *he that eateth not, judge him that eateth*:* he ſhould not preſume to ſet up his own opinion as a Law, nor condemn all who differ from him as ſinners and prophane. But foraſmuch as this is often the effect of weakneſs and human frailty; it will become us to condeſcend a little, and conform our ſelves to their narrower apprehenſions. *We that are ſtrong* (as the Apoſtle argues) *ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our ſelves*; but ſtudy *every one*, how *to pleaſe his neighbour*, by thus ſtooping to his weaker judgment, *for his good to edification*†. SERM. XVIII.

This Rule, it is obſervable, takes place only in thoſe matters which are left indifferent; and are, as ſuch, the proper field wherein to exerciſe our *Chriſtian Liberty*. In all other matters, which are either neceſſary in their own nature, or made ſo by the interpoſition of ſuperior Authority; we have no room to condeſcend to the humours of our brethren; we are not at liberty to alter our behaviour for fear of giving them offence. For the Law of ſcandal is the loweſt Rule that can be offered to direct our practice; and therefore it can never be ſufficient to ſet aſide any prior Obligation, or diſpenſe with thoſe Laws, which are either founded in the Reaſon

* Rom. xiv. 3. † Chap. xv. 1, 2.

of

SERM. XVIII.

of things, or bound upon us by the expreſs command of thoſe, who have right to govern and controul us. The *Scandal* in ſuch caſes is *taken*, but not *given*: and tho' we ſhould uſe all prudent care to ſet our matters in a clear light; yet we may not ſubmit to any compliance inconſiſtent with our Duty: for that were a direct Breach or Tranſgreſſion of the Divine Law, and not the Exerciſe of *Chriſtian Liberty*.

But when there is no neceſſity in the nature of the thing to bind us up, nor any deciſion of ſuperior Authority; it will then become us to conſider the opinions and infirmities of others; to *abſtain from all appearance of evil**, as well as from that which is evil in it ſelf; to take care that even our *good* may *not be evil ſpoken of*†, nor our *liberty become a ſtumbling block*, or an occaſion of falling, *to them that are weak*‡. For tho' all things may be lawful for us, yet *all things are not expedient*; and why *not expedient*, the Apoſtle explains, becauſe *they edifie not* ||. So that however agreeable ſuch practice may be to our own inclination, or however indifferent and allowable in it ſelf; yet ſo long as 'tis ill reported of by other people, it will become us to deny our ſelves for their edification; leſt by ſinning *againſt the brethren*, and wounding *their weak conſcience*, *we* be found even to *ſin*

* 1 Theſ. v. 22. † Rom. xiv. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. viii. 9.
|| Chap x. 23.

againſt

against Christ. Wherefore (as the Apostle speaks) *if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend*.* And again, *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak†.* SERM. XVIII.

It may perhaps be somewhat difficult, to state exactly the extent and obligation of this law of Scandal; or distinguish clearly between capriciousness of Humour, and religious Scrupulosity. But in general, 'tis manifestly founded on that Law of Charity, which requires us to consult the Benefit of others, and which the Apostle proposes in the Text, as the proper measure of our Christian Liberty. *But by love serve one another.* Which falling under the THIRD General Head proposed, must now be reserved for the Subject of another Discourse. *Now to God the Father, God the Son,* &c.

* 1 Cor. viii. 12, 13. † Rom. xiv. 21.

SER-

SERMON XIX.

Christian Liberty *to be governed, by* Christian Charity.

GAL. v. 13, 14, 15.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

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I Have already, in two former Discourses, explained the *Nature*, and exposed the *Abuses* of Christian Liberty. And from what was said on that occasion, it is evident, that this Privilege implies not an Exemption from the Restraints of Government and Laws; but rather an uniform subjection to the Authority of the supreme Lawgiver, and a removal of all those Impediments, which would hinder us from doing him that Service which is perfect Freedom. Since therefore his Law (to carry this argument a little farther) requires of us mutual Love and Charity; from hence it

it may appear, that our Christian Liberty, consisting in Obedience to this Law, does really bind us under a kind of Restraint or Servitude to one another. This therefore, the Apostle proposes, and I proceed now, in order, to consider, under the SERM. XIX.

III. THIRD General Head, as the proper measure of our Privilege, the right way to exercise our Christian Liberty: *But by love serve one another.*

The Service of God is our most perfect Freedom; and whilst his Law requires the Service of *Love* to one another, This can be no real Abridgment of our *Liberty*, but turns our mutual Services into acts of Obedience to him. To make open professions of Esteem and Love, when there is no such Principle at bottom, may indeed be difficult and uneasy, a heavy Yoke and Burden: But then, this has nothing to do with Christian Liberty, or Christian Duty; it is no real Service of Love or Christian Sympathy, no act of Obedience to the Law of God. 'Tis otherwise, where *that* Principle is settled in good earnest; there the outward expressions will naturally follow: so far from being difficult, they will be pleasant and agreeable; so far from an ungenerous and slavish Bondage, that our Duty in reality will be our mighty Privilege.

This, the Apostle shews in the Text, by *two* very substantial Arguments, the *first* of which

SERM. XIX. which is drawn from the Excellence and Benefit of such charitable Services: *for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self:* the *other* from those contrary mischiefs, which we shall hereby escape: *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

1. *First* then, I begin with the *Excellence* and Benefit of such Charity: *for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* And there are *three* things upon this Subject, which more particularly want to be explained, namely,

(1.) The *Object* of this Charity, and that is our *neighbour*; Thou shalt love thy *neighbour.*

(2.) The *Measure* of it, and that is *our selves*; Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thy self.* And,

(3.) The *End* of it, and that is the fulfilling of the Law; *for* all the Law is fulfilled *in one word, even in This; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* And,

(1.) *First* then, the *first* thing here considerable is the *Object* of this Charity, and that is our *neighbour*; Thou shalt love thy *neighbour.*

The usual notion of a *neighbour* is confined to those who live near us; and as near or *distant* are relatively understood; so in proportion to the matter we are speaking of, the

the notion of Neighbourhood will be more contracted or enlarged. When we are speaking of Kingdoms, and large divisions of the Earth; those of *France* and *Holland*, (for instance) and other *Western* Countries, may be reckon'd in our Neighbourhood; in comparison of *Persia* and *China*, which are at greater distance. But when we are speaking of places of less compass, it may be confined to the adjoining Counties or Villages, or perhaps to a few Streets or Houses round about us. In the Precept before us, the term is used in a more absolute Sense, and not limited by any of these Considerations. For no one ever pretended that our Love should be confined meerly by the bounds of Distance; or that it should be worthy of a reasonable nature, to measure out Friendship by the Scale of Miles.

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But yet as *Neighbourhood*, even in this acceptation, is a usual occasion for contracting Friendships and Intimacies of a stricter kind; from hence the *Jews* took occasion to affix a Limitation in this matter, that their Friendship should extend only to those of their own Nation and Religion, or such as by some particular Friendship and Alliance stood related to them; whilst they were allow'd to neglect and overlook all Mankind besides, or even to treat them with Indignity and Scorn. From hence arose among them, that proverbial Expression, *thou shalt love thy neighbour,*

SERM. XIX. *and hate thine enemy**. They thought there could be no Obligation to esteem and value those, who should maliciously endeavour to work their Hurt and Prejudice. Nay, tho' they were quiet, and not concern'd in any Practices against them, they had a secret contempt of all the *Gentile* World; and whilst they valued themselves as the Posterity of *Abraham*, they disdain'd even to converse with those of any other Nation.

This Narrowness of spirit, and Confinement of their love, our blessed Saviour reprehended in his Sermon on the Mount; where he taught them, that their bittersest Enemies were not to be excluded from their brotherly Affection; and set before them the Divine example to that purpose, in pouring out Benefits on the most unworthy and ungrateful. *I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.* † And to shew that even such are not excluded from the religious notion of *neighbourhood*; he elsewhere gives an account of a *Samaritan*'s kindness to a *Jew* in distress, which were People at utmost Enmity and Variance with each other; and thereby a full Solution of

* Mat. v. 43. † Mat. v. 44, 45.

the

the Lawyer's question, who enquired into the extent of *that* Relation. The result then of the Matter is this, that our inward principle of Charity must be universal, not bounded by any considerations of Kindred, Sect, or Country; but extending itself to the whole Race of Mankind; as considering, that we have *all one Father*, that *one God hath created us*†, *and made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth*‡. But for as much as, neither our Knowledge nor Abilities can reach to make outward expressions of this Love to every individual; it is sufficient that *that* Disposition, which is universal in itself, be actually exerted in good Offices, to those who shall fall within the Verge of our Notice or Acquaintance. These then, be they Natives or Foreigners, be they Enemies or Friends; These are in the Christian Sense our *Neighbours*, so earnestly recommended to our Care and Concern. And tho' all that part of Mankind, which we have never seen or heard of, or to whom we have no proper opportunities to communicate our good Will, must be of course excluded from this notion of Neighbourhood; yet this is only by accident: and since the Principle is universal, if any of them should hereafter fall within our Notice or Acquaintance; then they will be our Neighbours too, and

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† Mal. ii. 10. ‡ Act. xvii. 26.

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There is indeed some difference to be made between them; and where we cannot alike express our Benevolence to all, there are various Circumstances fit to be consider'd, in order to determine where it is due. The Necessities or Merit of the Men, or their closer Relation and Alliance to us, may justly give them the advantage in our Favour, and recommend them to our Succour and Assistance, before others, to whom we are not so nearly allied; who have less Merit to plead, or are not so much press'd by Necessity. To compare these Limitations with each other, and adjust exactly the Importance of them, to assign to each of them its proper weight, and shew in what order they ought to be consider'd, might be a work of longer time, than can at present with any convenience be allotted to it. But in general we may be sure, that such kind of Restrictions, are clearly authorised by that admirable rule of the Apostle, to *do good unto all men, as we have opportunity; but especially, unto them who are of the houshould of faith**. From this consideration of the *Object*, proceed we in the

(2.) *Second* place, to state the *measure* of our Charity, and that is *our selves*; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour *as thy self*. Which Precept is explain'd by that other of our blessed

* Gal. vi. 10.

Saviour,

Saviour, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them**. The expectations which we have from others, and our views to our own Interest, should be the Rule or Measure of our conduct towards others, and shew us, what they have reason to expect from us. This Rule indeed is not to be understood, as if we were always to expect returns in kind, from those to whom we do good Offices; or not to accept them at the Hands of others, unless we be capable of so returning them. This were to confound the Rule of Charity, instead of stating it. The Indigent, who ask Relief, are not qualified to give it; nor are they who give it, to expect it from them. The right way is to suppose a change of Circumstances; and then whatever good Offices they might reasonably expect from others in that change of Circumstances; the same should they be ready, at present, to perform towards them. I say, whatsoever they might *reasonably* expect: for if thro' a fond Principle of self Love, and a partial regard to their own Interest, they should be led to desire such kindnesses, as could not in Reason or Justice be expected; this can be no sufficient ground for their extending such Kindnesses to others, as would be alike unreasonable and unjust. I am no way bound (for instance) to preserve my Neighbour's Health or Reputation, at the ex-

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* Mat. vii. 12.

SERM. XIX. pence of my own; for this would not be to love him *as* my *self*, but *more*; and tho' perhaps I might, in his Circumstances, be tempted to wish for it from another; yet I should act without Reason in so doing: and therefore such wishes, built upon no solid Foundation, can be no sufficient Rule for my behaviour at present, which ought to be founded in the Reason of things.

Again, whilst I love my *Neighbour* as my self, I ought not to forget, that it is not *this* or *that* Neighbour only, but every one that has a right to my Affection. For this reason I am not allow'd, in such manner to express my Kindness to any one, as may prove a prejudice to the rest. It may be, the *Judge*, if in the *Criminal*'s place, would wish to be acquitted: but the publick good requires that Offenders should be punished: and wherever self Love is inordinate and unreasonable in itself; it can be no proper measure of our Love to others.

Under these Restrictions then, if we explain this Duty, of loving our Neighbour *as our selves*, and doing to others, *as we would, they should do to us*; we shall easily find it to comprize under it these several Particulars.

[1.] *First*, That we should be careful above all things, to do no one any injury; either by withholding from him, that which is his due, or by doing any thing to oppress and grieve him. For this, if we consult our-

selves,

selves, is the least that we expect from others, SERM. that they should leave us to the quiet enjoy- XIX. ment of our own Rights; and not busy themselves to injure or molest us. And this will include the discharge of all those relative Duties, which others, by their station in Life, have reason to expect from us; the care of Parents for their Children; the duty of Children to their Parents; the quiet Submission and Obedience of all to their proper Governors. For whilst we are defective in these or the like Particulars, we shall not render unto all their dues, nor do what we ourselves, in their Station, should have reason to expect.

[2.] *Secondly*, That we should be ready to forgive and put up Injuries, when offer'd us. There may be cases, and there often are, wherein we are allow'd the use of legal Remedies. But still whilst we redress the *wrong*, we should love and forgive the *man* that did it; we should not encourage in ourselves any secret thirst or desire of Revenge; but remember, that we are to hope for Pardon of our Trespasses from God, upon no other Condition, but as we forgive them that trespass *against us*,

[3.] *Thirdly*, That we should readily embrace all convenient Opportunities of doing him good Offices, and serving him by acts of Kindness, in proportion to our station in Life, and several Abilities. We are none of us qualified by Nature, to supply our wants by

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ourselves; but we all stand in need of the Assistance and Ministry of others, to make our passage tolerable thro' this vale of Misery. From this necessity of Nature, we should learn to lend our neighbourly assistance, to such as want it; that so we may not be useless in our Generation, nor subsist by the kindness and industry of others, without making some returns of like nature, to the common Benefit.

[4.] *Fourthly*, That if our assistance cannot reach to every one that wants it, yet our good wishes may; and we should retain such a general Benevolence, and good Will to Men, as if we ourselves were in the place of them all, and they stood allied to us as our own Flesh. Good Wishes indeed, as we are taught by St. *James*, will be but a poor Manifestation of our brotherly Affection; if they are not productive of such acts of Kindness, as we have it in our power to exert: or rather, they cannot, in that case, be sincere, and *without dissimulation*; as the Love of our Neighbour ought certainly to be; and will be, if measured and regulated by the Love of ourselves.

[5.] *Fifthly*, That we should have a mutual Sympathy, or Fellow-feeling of each other's Allotments; that we should *rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*; and be sensibly affected with every thing that happens to them, as to Persons whom we love in like manner with ourselves.

selves. Our *sensitive* Nature, no doubt, will be most easily elated or depressed by those Dispensations which befal ourselves, and but little touched with the Happiness or Miseries of others: But our *rational* Faculty will supply the Weakness of *Sense*; and the Energy of *Grace* is added to inforce and invigorate our *Reason*. And tho' neither of them do forbid us to be first concern'd about our own Affairs; as being more in our power, and falling more directly within the sphere of our activity; yet they do *both* require us to extend our Care to others, and not consume it entirely upon ourselves: since a due mixture of both is necessary to the Observation of this Precept; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. And now, after having thus far explain'd the Nature of the Duty, it will be the easier to satisfy our SERM. XIX.

3. *Third* enquiry, into the *End* of it here assign'd by the Apostle, and that is *the fulfilling of the law*; *for all the law is fulfill'd in one word, even in this*; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*: or, as it is more briefly express'd to the same purpose, (in the *Epistle* to the *Romans*,) *He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law.* *

The first doubt, which presents itself on this occasion, is grounded on the Infirmity of human Nature; which has so universally impair'd our Abilities, and depraved our Incli-

* Rom. xiii. 8.

nations.

SERM. XIX. nations, that it has involv'd us all in the Transgression of the Law: *there is none that doth good, no not one*; but *all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God:* insomuch that if he should enter into exact Judgment with us, there should *no flesh living be justified* before him. It may seem from hence, a vain attempt for any one to *fulfill the law*, or expect to render such a perfect Obedience, as must suppose him to be first divested of this natural Infirmity. But this difficulty will be easily removed, when 'tis remembered that the Gospel requires not a legal Righteousness nor exacts perfect Obedience without any defect; it asks only for simplicity and sincerity of Heart, which excludes all perverse and presumptuous Disobedience: and for the weaknesses of Nature, as well as for those wilful Transgressions, which are repented of, and forsaken; it shews us an all-powerful Atonement and Satisfaction, made by him who paid a perfect Obedience. Thus, however the Law of *Christ* may be the same in Substance with That of *Moses*; (if we attend to the inward meaning and design of *Moses*;) yet if his Law be only externally consider'd, they are then widely different as to the terms of Obedience: the one could not be fulfill'd for it's Rigour and Severity; the other may undoubtedly; and that by *Love*.

It will however be matter of some difficulty to account, how the Love of our Neighbour

bour should be called *the fulfilling of the law*, even in this Evangelical or Gospel Sense. The *moral Law*, which is renew'd and enforced under the Gospel, is known to consist of *two Tables:* of which the *first* contains the Precepts of our Duty towards God; the *other* of our Duty towards our Neighbour. And therefore our blessed Saviour has mention'd the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, as the *two* great *Commandments* upon which *all the Law and the Prophets* did depend*. But how St. *Paul* came to ascribe the same excellence to That *love of our Neighbour* singly, which our Saviour has mention'd as the last of the two: This may appear a difficulty which deserves to be consider'd.

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And to this purpose, some may be thought perhaps to have cut the Knot, rather than untyed it; by understanding the Apostle to mean only the Duties of the *second* Table, which concern our Neighbour, and therefore are manifestly included in our Love to him. This Sense might perhaps be better adapted to that other Passage to the *Romans:* because the Apostle is there more particularly treating of the Duties, which we owe to one another, and enforces his Observation with this reason, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*; *i. e.* it suffers us not in any respect to violate our Duty towards him; *therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*†. But besides that there is

* Matt. xxii. 37—40. † Rom. xiii. 10.

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nothing in the Context to incline us to *that* Interpretation of the passage before us; it seems indeed to be directly excluded by the addition of the universal Article; *for* ALL *the law is fulfill'd in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* It seems not therefore to be *one* part of the Law only, but the *whole*; not only the *second* Table of the *Decalogue*, but *both*, which St. *Paul* here declares to be summ'd up in this single Precept, and fulfilled accordingly by the Observance of it.

The difficulty then returns, to shew how the Duties of the *first* Table, or our Love to God, should be included and fulfilled in this *love of one another.* And this indeed might appear very considerable, if we were to look upon that Love meerly as a Motion or Affection of the Mind, without regard to the Fountion or Principle from which it springs. But when we look upon it as founded in Religion; when we love our Neighbour, because he is partaker of the same Nature with ourselves; endued with the same Powers both of Body and Mind; capable of the same Privileges or Misfortunes with ourselves; created and sustain'd by the same supreme Author and Governor of all things, and redeem'd by the Blood of the same common Saviour; because farther we are enjoin'd it by the Authority of the supreme Lawgiver, who both in the Book of Nature and by expres Reve-

lation, has prescribed our Duty in this Particular; when these are the Principles upon which our Love is founded, *the love of our neighbour* will include *the love of God*; as being an act of Obedience to his Commands, and implying the utmost Reverence for the *Original*, when we have such value for the *Transcript*, the Creature that was made after his own Image. Without these Principles it can never be *that* Affection which the Gospel requires; the whole Cause is requisite to the nature of *Christian*, as well as *moral* Virtue: and as That *Love* which arises out of different views, cannot be the fulfilling of the *whole* Law, so neither indeed of *any part* of it; being really vicious in it's Original, and not perform'd upon Principles of true Obedience. SERM. XIX.

Again, where there is first *that* Principle of Duty to God, This *love of our neighbour* will naturally follow as it's proper effect. And therefore St. *John* reckon'd them so inseparable, that if any Man should pretend *that* Love of God, without *this* Love of his Brother issuing from it, he would thereby be convinc'd of the grossest Absurdity and Contradiction to himself. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen; how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? and this commandment have we from him, that he*

SERM. XIX. *he who loveth God, love his brother also* *. When St. *Paul* therefore affirms, that all the Law is fulfilled in the Observation of this single Precept, he is no way inconsistent with our blessed Saviour; but takes this Precept in it's utmost extent, as comprehending both those great Commandments, upon which *all the law, and the prophets* do depend.

Such then is the *Excellence* of mutual Charity, that it fulfills the Law, and implies that subjection to the will of God, in which our Liberty consists. But it will yet appear more lovely and desirable, when we proceed to the

2. *Second* Argument, by which the Apostle recommends it in the Text, namely the contrary mischiefs of Enmity and Discord; *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

There is nothing can more certainly Conduce to the ruin of any Community, than the variance and disagreement of it's Members. Whilst they are close compacted by one bond of Amity, they mutually support and add strength to one another; they unite their Councils; they exert all their Powers for the common Interest; and by a conjunction of Forces, do baffle and repel the fury of their common Enemies. But when they are disjointed by Divisions and intestine Animosites, then that Fence and Inclosure is thrown

* 1 Joh. iv. 20, 21.

down

down, which should secure them; there is a way laid open for the Enemies Incursions, they treacherously take part with their enemies abroad, to be revenged on those at home; or at least they weaken their own strength, and greatly diminish their power of Resistance, by banding into opposite Parties, and not leaving a force sufficient in one body, to make head against any sudden Hostilities. Nay, they even do their enemies work on one another, and blow up such coals of Contention and Strife between themselves, that, regardless of those greater evils, with which all may be oppressed, they exert the utmost of their Zeal and Industry to frustrate the designs of one another; and instead of uniting in the *love* of Brethren, pursue each other with the *hate* of deadly Enemies. 'Tis so both in Ecclesiastical and Civil Broils; and unless the flame be in due time extinguished, we may see in such lamentable instances the sad exemplification of our Saviour's Aphorism, that *every house or kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation.* SERM. XIX.

But why should we dwell on the Mischiefs which they do to one another; when every man becomes his own Tormentor, and unnaturally sheaths his weapon in his own Bowels? For can there be a more exquisite Torture than a Mind that meditates Malice and Revenge; that *is* (as the Prophet describes the wicked) *like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose*

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whose waters cast up mire and dirt? How is he disquieted and in perpetual Anguish, to work the Mischief of those whom he accounts his enemies! How does he pine and grieve at their contrary Successes! And how is every misfortune that befalls himself made double by the thought of its putting him still more below them! Or if matters should succeed more to his wish and expectation; yet how inhuman in itself, and withal how short is the Enjoyment of his satisfaction! How are his fears alarmed, lest the vanquished foe should rise out of his obscurity! How is his care exerted to prevent it, or to increase the Miseries he labours under! Give a man but Peace and Quiet in his own Breast; and he is happy, whatever outward advantages he may seem to want. But deprive him of That, and all the Wealth or Honour of the universe can avail him little; his inward Uneasiness must make all things else insipid, if not nauseous to him.

From the Excellence of *Charity*, and the Mischiefs of *Division*, as they have now been stated, it will be easy to account why St. *Paul* proposes mutual Love, as the most proper measure for the exercise of *Christian Liberty*; because it will engage us in that generous and easy Service of God, which is perfect Freedom, and our highest Privilege: whilst Uncharitableness would gall us with the yoke of Slavery, and expose us to the utmost

most danger and uneasiness. And from hence alas! it will be no less easy to point out our own Unhappiness in this particular; how under the advantage of the clearest Knowledge, and the surest means to conduct us to the acknowledgment of the Truth, and practice of our Duty; we are so blinded with prejudice and partiality, as to choose out contrary ways, and judge of the merits both of Doctrines and men, not by the old Standard of Scripture and Reason; but by the new fangled maxims and tenets of a Party: how, tho' surrounded with enemies on every side, who watch for occasions to distract and ruin us; we are yet so absurd, as to expose one another to their Rage and Fury, and give them a real advantage over all. O that *my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night* *, for the unnatural strivings of a people, whose Interest as well as Duty should bind them up to Peace and Unity; who are yet so blind to the means of their own real Welfare, and have brought their Divisions at length to such maturity, that they seem ripe for that Vengeance, which was denounced against a City distinguished by its enjoyment of Favours and Privileges above all others! *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a* SERM. XIX.

* Jer. ix. 1.

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hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Behold, your house is left unto you desolate †. *O that thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes* ‡.—Ere we are thus sealed up to inexorable Vengeance, may God Almighty, of his infinite Mercy, be pleased to shew us our Errors, and give us Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth; to heal our Divisions, and avert our Punishment, for the sake of his Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord; *to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory*, &c.

† Mat. xxiii. 37, 38 ‡ Luke xix. 42.

SER-

SERMON XX.

The right Method of doing All, *to the* GLORY *of* GOD.

1 COR. x. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

THIS Rule of general import and concern in the conduct of life, is inserted here by the Apostle, as he draws to a conclusion, in his Resolution of that Case, which had been disputed in the Church of *Corinth*, concerning the eating of *meats offered to Idols*. SERM. XX.

There were persons, it seems, so weak as to imagine, that there was some Pollution inherent in the Meats themselves, by reason of such Dedication, whilst others, from the juster sense they had that these Heathen Idols had no such Divinity as their Votaries vainly ascribed to them, collected, that consequently they had no power to vitiate or pollute those Creatures of God, which were offered to them in Sacrifice. The reasoning of these last the Apostle admits to be conclusive in the general; but yet allows not its application to the present Controversy without some Distinction.

SERM. XX. For tho' it were true, that the Meats themselves had no proper or inherent Pollution; yet such might be the circumstance of eating them, as to render that action highly blameable and unworthy of a *Christian*. Some portions of the Victim were eaten by the Heathens in the Idol Temple; and that feasting on the Sacrifice was a constructive act of Honour to the Idol which they worshipped, and consent to their Idolatry. And since those Idols, tho' dumb and unactive of themselves, were yet actuated or inhabited by *Demons* and evil Spirits, who uttered from thence ambiguous Oracles, and gave signs or answers to their Votaries; this was moreover an act of holding Communion or Fellowship with *Devils*; in like manner as they, who did eat of the *Jewish* Sacrifices, were understood to be partakers of the Altar of God; and they who eat and drink in the Christian Sacrament of the *Eucharist*, are partakers of the Body and Blood of *Christ*.

So then, altho' an *Idol* were nothing, and all That which was *offered in sacrifice to idols* were nothing; yet in regard that *the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to Devils and not to God*, the feasting on such Sacrifices must consequently be interpreted an act of holding Fellowship with *Devils*; and was therefore most unbecoming the character of a *Christian*, who could not with any consistency pretend to partake of *the Lord's table, and of the table of Devils*. This

This was the Resolution of the Case with respect to what was eaten *in the Idol Temple*. But as to those portions of the Victim, which were brought afterwards to market and sold in common with other food, the case was widely different. For there being plainly no inherent Pollution in the thing it self, nor any sacrificial act at this time performed in honour of the Idol, the Christian was clearly at liberty to eat whatsoever was thus *sold in the shambles, asking no question for conscience sake*; by no means making it a scruple of Conscience, whether it had ever been dedicated to an Idol or no: Being fully convinced of this, as every good Christian is and must be, that *the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*; that all things which serve to our nourishment are the good Creatures of God; at whose hand we should receive them with Praise and Thankfulness; and not look on them as the gift of any Idol whatsoever. Nay, even tho' an *Heathen* man should invite a *Christian* to an Entertainment, the *Christian* was still at liberty to go, and eat without scruple what was set before him, *asking*, again, *no question for conscience sake*. SERM. XX.

But notwithstanding this Liberty to eat, and thorough persuasion that there was no Pollution in the thing it self; yet in regard to the weakness or prejudice of other People, it might, many times, be decent for them of better understanding to abridge their Liberty, and deny them-

SERM. XX. themſelves the uſe of what was lawful; when it appear'd not to be edifying or expedient. The weaker *Chriſtians*, for example, having other notions of the matter, might either be led to cenſure them for eating, as prophane Perſons, and running into Heathen Idolatry; or elſe they might be drawn to an imitation of the ſame Practice, without the ſame Light and Perſuaſion: By which means, what was innocent in *one caſe*, would be really criminal and guilty in *the other*. Or the Heathens themſelves might look upon it, as an act of Compliance, with the conceit they had of the Influence and Power of their *Deities*; and from thence might be the more confirm'd in their wicked Superſtition. And the *Jews*, in the laſt place, muſt be greatly ſcandalized, as having the greateſt Abhorrence of *things offered to idols*, and looking upon thoſe who ſhould eat of them, as the vileſt of *Apoſtates*.

However then the matter were indifferent in itſelf, and when bought or ſerv'd up as common Food, might be ſafely eaten without ſcrupulous enquiry; yet care was to be taken that they might give no Offence, neither to the *Jews*, nor to the *Gentiles*, nor to the weaker Members of the *Chriſtian* Church. And therefore, if any of theſe ſhould point out to them, and declare that ſuch Meats *had been offer'd in ſacrifice to idols*; they were then religiouſly to abſtain: tho' not from any Conſcience of inherent Pollution; yet out of a tender

a tender regard to the Infirmities of others, who had not the ſame Knowledge with themſelves; that whilſt they were free from the Reproaches of their own Breaſts, they might not ſo miſuſe their Liberty, as to be *judged*, or expoſed to the cenſures, *of another man's conſcience. For the earth*, again, *is the Lord's and the fulneſs thereof.* The Bounty of Divine Providence furniſhed out Proviſions enough beſides, which might be eaten without Offence; and therefore ought to have been prefer'd to theſe, which were ſo likely to confirm ſome in *Infidelity*, and draw others to *prophaneneſs*, as well as to provoke the cenſoriouſneſs of the reſt, and ſo to be attended on all hands with the breach of Charity. Whilſt thus their behaviour ſhould be regulated with an eye to the Edification of their Brethren, it would farther conduce, in the neceſſary conſequence of things, to the Praiſe *and Glory of God.* And to this purpoſe therefore, the Apoſtle has applied the maxim of the Text; which may be farther extended, and refer'd to the common conduct of Life. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* I ſhall apply my ſelf accordingly, in the remainder of this Diſcourſe, SERM. XX.

I. To ſtate or lay down that grand Point or Principle, which we ſhould have in view, and make the ultimate Aim and End of

SERM. XX. all our Actions, viz. *the glory of God. Do all to the glory of God.*

II. To explain how this view may be purſued in the daily and moſt ordinary Actions of Life; *Whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do.* And then

III. To ſpeak ſomething in particular of the Promotion of it; by the demeaning of ourſelves, in ſuch manner as may help to improve and edify our Brethren; and avoiding every likely occaſion of Scandal or Offence.

I. FIRST then, I would propoſe that grand Point or Principle, which we ſhould have in view, and make the ultimate aim and end of all our Actions; viz. *the glory of God: do all to the glory of God.*

As God is the only immenſe, the only neceſſary and ſelf-exiſtent Being, the Cauſe, the Author and Upholder of all other Beings; poſſeſs'd himſelf of all poſſible Perfection, and the Fountain of all thoſe ſeveral degrees of Perfection, which are conſpicuous in the Creatures of his Workmanſhip; it follows, that all the Faculties and Powers of thoſe his Creatures muſt naturally be refer'd to, and terminate in, his Praiſe and Glory; from whoſe Bounty alone they were deriv'd, and for the advancement of whoſe Honour, they were plainly calculated. It is thus, that the *Heavens* are ſaid to *declare the glory of God, and the firmament to ſhew forth his handywork:* thus, that *the inviſible things of God, even his eternal Power*

Power and Godhead, are clearly ſeen from the Creation of the World, *being underſtood by the things which he has made:* thus laſtly, that he is ſaid *not* to have *left himſelf without witneſs among all nations; in that he ſendeth them rain and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their hearts with food and gladneſs.* All the Creatures in the Univerſe, and the moſt uſual methods of Providence, do loudly proclaim the Exiſtence and Perfection of their Maker and Director; and ſo ſhew forth the tranſcendent Excellence and Glory of his Majeſty. SERM. XX.

And if thus the Works of Nature be ſubſervient to this End; no doubt, it muſt be more eſpecially expected of reaſonable Agents, that they ſhould, in their ſeveral Orders and Capacities, be inſtrumental to promote it. Their natural Frame and Conſtitution, their Faculties and Powers, whether of Body or Mind, muſt needs conſpire, in common with other natural Productions; and whether they will or no, ſerve to illuſtrate and diſplay the Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of the great Creator. But as they are Creatures endued with Reaſon and Choice, and diſtinguiſh'd by Privileges not common with the reſt of the Creation, ſuch as their Redemption from Sin and Miſery, thro' *Chriſt*, and the glorious hopes of an immortal Bleſſedneſs; it is furthermore required of them, that they ſhould, both from the nature of things, and from the Light of Revelation, learn to collect and expreſs

SERM. XX. expreſs the Praiſes of him, who has ſo ſpread his Mercies over all his Works, and more particularly has been pleas'd to call them *out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*. The perfection of their nature conſiſting in that Divine Image and Likeneſs wherein they were originally created, and to which, we may be ſtill renew'd and reſtored by the Grace and Mercy of the Goſpel; it will be no leſs their Happineſs than Duty to cultivate daily more and more the remaining footſteps of ſuch Perfection, that ſo the Glory of God may be reſplendent throughout all their Actions; and the Light of their Example may be made to ſhine in ſuch manner before other Men, that they alſo may be induced to imitate them, and join in ſetting forth the Glory of their Father, which is in Heaven. From hence I proceed

II. SECONDLY to explain, how this view to God's Glory may be purſued in the daily and moſt ordinary Actions of Life. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do; do all to the glory of God.*

How the acts of Divine Worſhip, and indeed the whole Catalogue of moral Virtues have a tendency to this End; there is little need to explain, becauſe there can be no Colour to diſpute it. But how the View ſhould be conſtantly kept up, and the moſt caſual and indifferent of our Actions be made ſubſervent to it; this is the Difficulty which deſerves

ſerves to be clear'd up, under a few Reflecti- SERM. ons. XX.

1. *Firſt*, The moſt ordinary acts of Life, no doubt, ſhould be conducted with a view to the ſtrict Rules of Virtue, and the Commands of God. The thing will only need to be illuſtrated under a few Inſtances. Thus eating and drinking; the Examples of the Text, are as well neceſſary to the Support of our Being, as conducive to Delight and Satisfaction; but yet, unleſs kept under the Regulations of Temperance and a frugal Regard to our reſpective Circumſtances, they may be eaſily abuſed, to diſhonour God, in the Tranſgreſſion of his Laws, which have forbidden Luxury, and all Intemperance. So again, Sleep and Relaxation from Buſineſs, intermix'd with agreeeable Converſation and other innocent Amuſements, are neceſſary to refreſh and recreate the Spirits, and keep us from ſinking under thoſe cares of Life, which might be otherwiſe too great to be endured: But yet, even theſe may be indulged till they grow into Sloth and Inactivity; and not only loſe their Uſefulneſs or Innocence, but alſo lead into Vices of a groſſer Kind; as well by giving leiſure to attend, as inclination to commit them. If we ſee theſe Exceſſes, and endeavour to avoid them, out of a juſt Senſe of Duty towards God, and that Honour he receives from our Obedience to his Laws; in That Caſe, our Eating and

SERM. XX. and Drinking and common Recreations (indifferent, as they may ſeem, to vulgar and injudicious men) do grow (as it were) into acts of real Virtue, and are conducted with a view to *the glory of God.* Again,

2. *Secondly*, the ſame End will be ſerved, when theſe things are done, under an humble and grateful ſenſe of the Divine Favour, in granting us the advantage and opportunity of doing them. That we have, for the purpoſe, eaſe and opportunity for Sleep, and proper Recreation, is owing to the Bounty of Divine Providence; and ſo is the tendency they have to our Refreſhment and Recovery from all Fatigue. For this we ſhould be thankful to that careful Providence, which watches over us for good, and makes the leaſt conſiderable of its occurrences conſpire to our Eaſe and Satisfaction. So again, the Food by which our Bodies are nouriſhed and ſuſtained, is ſupplied by the ſame bounteous and kindly hand, which maketh *corn to ſpring out of the earth*, as well as *graſs to grow upon the mountains*, and *herb for the uſe of men*; the ſame that giveth *fodder unto the cattle*, and *feedeth the young ravens that call upon him.*

And as it is God only, who by his gracious Providence ſupplies the matter of our Food; ſo it is he alone who can bleſs it to its proper uſe and effect, and ſuit it in ſuch manner to our Frame and Conſtitution, that it may ſerve for

for the Nutrition and Refreſhment of our Bo- SERM.
dies; by ſupplying a continual recruit of Blood XX.
and Spirits, and aſſimilating, in juſt meaſure
and proportion, to the ſubſtance of Fleſh or Bone. *Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* It is by virtue of his Bleſſing, that our Food it ſelf is made ſubſervient to our uſe and ſuſtenance. And from hence we ſee the decency and reaſonableneſs of that Practice, which has always been obſerved by men of Virtue and Religion, that it be received with Thankfulneſs, and ſanctified by Prayer; that we ought to look up for the Divine Bleſſing upon what we eat, under a grateful ſenſe that it is the God that made us, who ſtill *poureth out his benefits upon us.* Whilſt thus the return of every Meal, and every Diverſion, is made to fill our minds, with a freſh ſenſe of the Divine Favours; Religion will appear to be the End of all our actions; and *whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do,* we ſhall *do all to the glory of God.* Once more,

3. *Thirdly,* God's Glory will be promoted by theſe ordinary acts of life, when we propoſe to uſe that Health and Strength (which we do hereby recover or increaſe) in the ſervice of God, and the performance of our Duty towards him. The more immediate End of eating and drinking, is to ſatisfy the cravings of Hunger and Thirſt; and the next to That is the Support of Life, and of that

SERM. XX. Health and Strength, which is requiſite either to its comfort or continuance. But how oftentimes is Health and Strength unnaturally abuſed, to diſhonour him who gave it? How is it made ſubſervient to the fouleſt Vices, as well to the breach of relative Juſtice, and Charity, as to the commiſſion of perſonal Impurities? Inſtead of this, the man of Religion will propoſe to ſpend his life in Obedience to the Laws of God; he will *go about doing good*, and lay out the time and abilities which God ſhall give him, in making farther progreſs towards Perfection; in taking fit occaſions to teſtify his *love*, both *towards God*; *and his neighbour*; and in *cleanſing himſelf from all filthineſs, both of the fleſh and ſpirit.*

As God then is glorified by ſuch behaviour, and this is the reſolved employment of that Life and Health, which is ſupplied or ſupported by our daily Food and neceſſary Recreations; you ſee how even They may be made ſubſervient to the Divine Glory, and directed to fulfill the end of our Creation. Let but our Faculties and Powers be in good earneſt devoted to the Service of God, and let That be our view when we labour to continue or recruit them; and then, *whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, we ſhall do all to the glory of God:* our ultimate aim and End will be the diſcharging of our Duty towards him; and ſo, the Actions which ſeem moſt indifferent, will grow up into Virtues; and what

might otherwiſe be charged with Partiality and Fondneſs for our ſelves, will really in that caſe become acts of Duty, and be conducted by religious Motives. SERM. XX.

So likewiſe in the buſineſs of our ſeveral Callings, tho' we may reaſonably propoſe ſome Profit or Advantage to our ſelves; yet whilſt we deſign withal to be uſeful in that ſtate of life wherein God has placed us, and make that very Profit ſubſervient to ſo great an End, our views are ſtill ultimately reſolved into *the Glory of God*; which is made the dernier reſort of every Undertaking, the governing motive and principle of all our Actions. How wiſely then has God tempered our Duty and our Intereſt together, that every Action of life is capable of being made religious, and every Meal an act of real Worſhip! Thus *Nature* it ſelf will be converted into *Grace:* our regards to ourſelves will terminate in God, and the diſcharging of our Duty towards him: and when we ſeem moſt of all to be conſulting the Support of our Bodies, we ſhall really promote the Salvation of our Souls.

Not that we are to ſuppoſe our ſelves obliged, to have *God's Glory* directly in our thoughts, throughout every moment, and upon every occaſion that occurs in life! The frailty of our nature will not admit of ſuch perpetual and uninterrupted Contemplation: Nor would it conſiſt with our attending to that

SERM. XX. that variety of Duty, God has called us to discharge. It may suffice therefore, that we have first formed our Purposes and Resolutions of living, with a strict regard to our Duty, and *the Glory of God*, in the performance of it; and afterwards, that we take frequent occasions to renew and recollect Them. From hence, we shall be habitually disposed, in the frame and temper of our minds, to pursue that great End of our Religion: and then, the several actions of our lives will be but (as it were) the exemplifications of that habit of mind, and properly conducted by it; altho' we should not, at every turn, have it actually in our thoughts, what may be the whole tendency and result of them.

After this general account, how the ordinary acts of life may be directed to *the Glory of God*, it will be proper in the,

III. THIRD place, to speak something more particularly of the Promotion of it; by the demeaning of our selves in such manner, as may help to improve and edify our Brethren; and by avoiding every likely occasion of Scandal or Offence.

For this is the Point which the Apostle had directly in view. He had granted the indifference of all meats, even tho' they had been offered in Sacrifice to Idols; provided they were not eaten in the Idol Temple as a sacrificial Banquet; but only set before them, at a common Entertainment. Yet, in regard the weak-

weakneſs of ſome men was ſuch, that they had not judgment enough to diſtinguiſh Caſes, and reaſon nicely about the nature of inherent Pollution; it could not but become thoſe of a better Capacity, to ſtoop a little to their weakneſs; and rather to abridge ſomewhat of their own Liberty, than either to provoke their Cenſure, or by a miſtaken example, ſeduce them to do that, of which their Conſcience was not ſatisfied: according to that noble Reſolution of the Apoſtle in the caſe: *Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth, leſt I make my brother to offend.* SERM. XX.

The Rule which is mentioned upon this occaſion, will be juſtly applicable to the exerciſe of Liberty, in any other matters of indifferent nature; where the prejudice of weaker Judgments ſhall occaſion the practice on one ſide to be miſchievous *by accident*, tho' it be not otherwiſe unlawful in it ſelf. Only the Rule muſt be taken under two reſtrictions, leſt it be abuſed to miſlead us into Error, inſtead of conducting us aright: *viz.*

1. That the matter be like that which the Apoſtle treats of; not only indifferent in its own nature; but left in that indifference by our Superiors: for our Liberty may be reſtrained by the intervention of Authority; ſo that the things which are indifferent in themſelves, may be not indifferent to us, when ſete ld and determined by them who have the right of decid-

SERM. XX. ing in such cases; the Duty of Obedience to lawful Government, being ever of an higher Obligation, than that of stooping to the weakness of mistaken Brethren.

2. That by studying to avoid Offence or Scandal on one side, we do not draw on Censure and Reproaches on the other; for in many cases it may so happen, that there are weak Brethren on both sides the question: and then there will be need of great prudence and caution, so to steer between them, as to offend neither; or if that be utterly impossible, then rather to incline to them who are nearest in their Judgment to the truth of things.

Under these Restrictions if we use our Liberty, without giving Offence to weaker Brethren, whether in eating or drinking, or other things of an indifferent kind, we shall do it to *the glory of God*, who esteems his Honour to be nearly concerned in that regard we shew for the Edification and Improvement of other men; and that upon the three following accounts: namely,

1. *First*, As it is an act of Charity. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.* A sense of superior Knowledge and Abilities may be in danger of leading us to despise those whose Attainments appear to be inferior. But it is not the Property of Christian Love or Charity to be so puffed up: That *vaunteth not it self, neither behaves it self unseemly*, but looks upon the weakest of Christians under the cha-

character of *Brethren*, *for whom Chriſt died*, as well as for the ſtrong; and whom therefore, after his Example, we ſhould learn to honour and labour to improve. From hence it is induced to *bear all things and endure all things*, and even to deny it ſelf thoſe Liberties which might otherwiſe be lawful, when in regard of ſuch our Brethren, they ſhall appear to be inexpedient, becauſe they edify not. Since then the Divine Glory is promoted by nothing more than by the Love of Brethren, which is made the very *Characteriſtick* of *Chriſt*'s Diſciples, and declared to be the fulfilling of the Law of God; you ſee how it evidently follows, that this ſtudy to avoid Scandal, which is ſo plainly the effect of that brotherly Love or Charity, muſt needs conduce, in the neceſſary iſſue and reſult of things, to promote the Glory of God. Again, SERM. XX.

2. *Secondly*, As it ſets forward the Salvation of other men, it is ſtill ſubſervient to the ſame End. The Scandal that is given to weak Brethren, is apt many times to lead them to uncharitable Cenſures, and ſometimes to an imitation of that Practice which their own Judgment reckons to be ſinful. Thus (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) *their conſcience being weak is defiled.* Tho' the matter in it ſelf be truly lawful, yet they do it under a ſenſe of Guilt, and therefore muſt be anſwerable for it in the ſight of God. And in ſuch

SERM. XX. woful instances, That comes to pass, which the Apostle laments; that *the weak brother is made to perish, for whom Christ died.* But on the other hand, by stooping to their Infirmities, and carefully avoiding every matter of Offence; they will be greatly edified and confirmed in their Religion, and excited to persevere in their Duty, with greater chearfulness, and an increase of Charity. As then *the glory of God* is manifested and set forth in the Salvation of men; there can be no doubt but this charitable condescension, which is so plainly calculated to promote the one, must in proportion heighten and display the other. Once more,

3. *Thirdly*, As such compassionate Deportment will incline spectators to admire our Religion, and honour the God whom we profess to worship; it is farther instrumental to advance the Praise and Glory of God. That God is glorified by the Obedience of his Saints; and particularly in the instances of Meekness and Charity and brotherly Affection, cannot be disputed: And This, not only whilst they are considered as personal Virtues, wherein they have themselves been duly exercised; but more especially as those Virtues have been made exemplary, and Patterns of good Works to other men; that they also may be induced to follow such Examples, and *glorify our Father which is in heaven.*

To conclude, there will be little danger of our failing in this article of Scandal, if we be but careful to obſerve what was adviſed under the SECOND Head of Diſcourſe, that all the moſt indifferent Actions of our lives ſhould be conducted with a view to this great End of Religion. Let but an earneſt Piety be fixed within; Let God have our Heart, and the ſovereign Rule of our Affections; and then, as the Principle of natural life is with the blood diſperſed throughout the whole body, ſo will this inward and ſpiritual Principle be ſure to diffuſe it ſelf throughout the whole man, and ſpread thro' the whole courſe of his Behaviour; then will every Faculty and every Power receive ſuch a deep tincture of Religion, that all the Actions of our lives cannot but ſavour of it, the Love of God and of Brethren will be always thought upon and always purſued; ſo that *whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, we ſhall do all to the glory of God.* And thus may God be glorified in all things thro' *Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now and henceforth for evermore.* Amen. SERM. XX.

FINIS.

At the Requeſt of a particular Friend, here follows a CATALOGUE *of the* WRITINGS *publiſhed by* Dr. BERRIMAN *in his Life time.*

1. A SEASONABLE REVIEW of Mr. *Whiſton*'s Account of PRIMITIVE DOXOLOGIES, *&c.* by a Preſbyter of the Dioceſe of *London.* printed in the Year 1719. with a ſingle half Sheet of *Additions* to the *ſeaſonable Review*, &c.

2. A SECOND REVIEW of Mr. *Whiſton*'s Account of Primitive Doxologies. *By the Author of* the ſeaſonable Review. 1719.

3. A SERMON before the LORD MAYOR and ALDERMEN, at St. PAUL's, on Sunday Nov. 5. 1721.

4. A SERMON before the CAPTIVES, at St. PAUL's, Dec. 4. 1721.

5. A SERMON at St. *Andrews Underſhaft*, the Sunday after Induction, April 29. 1722.

6. A SERMON before the *Univerſity* of OXFORD, on ACT SUNDAY, July 8. 1722.

7. A SERMON before the LORD MAYOR and ALDERMEN, at St. *Lawrence*'s Church, Sept. 29. 1722.

8. AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT of the Trinitarian Controverſy, in Eight Sermons preached at the Lady *Moyer*'s Lecture, in St. PAUL's Cathedral, in the Years 1723 and 1724. printed 1725.

9. A SERMON before the Charity Children, at St. *Sepulchre*'s, May 20. 1725.

10. A SERMON before the *Merchant Taylors* Scholars, at St. *Mary le Bow*, Dec. 1. 1726.

11. A SERMON before the LORD MAYOR and ALDERMEN, at St. *Bridget*'s, in Eaſter Week. 1730.

12. A DEFENSE of ſome Paſſages, in the Hiſtorical Account of the Trinitarian Controverſy, printed 1731.

13. A SERMON before the LORD MAYOR and ALDERMEN, at St. PAUL'S, Jan. 30. 1732—3.

14. SERMONS at *Boyle*'s Lecture, in 2 Volumes 8vo. 1733.

15. BRIEF REMARKS on Mr. *Chandler*'s Introduction to the Hiſtory of the Inquiſition. 1733.

16. A REVIEW of the Remarks. 1733.

17. A SERMON on Family Religion, at St. *Andrew*'s *Underſhaft*, March 23. 1734—5.

18. A SERMON before the Sons of the Clergy, at St. PAUL'S, April 21. 1737.

19. A SERMON before the Truſtees for *Georgia*, at St. *Bridget*'s, March 15. 1738—9.

20. A SERMON before the Religious Societies, at St. *Mary le Bow*, March 21. 1738—9.

21. A SERMON before the Society, correſponding with the Society at *Dublin*, at St. *Mary le Bow*, March 23. 1742—3.

22. Concio ad Clerum Lond. in Eccleſia S. Elphegi, v. Id. Maij. 1742.

BOOKS printed for JOHN CLARKE under the Royal Exchange, Cornhill, London.

1. SErmons on the Creation, Fall and Redemption of Man, and on the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel, &c. By Henry Felton, D. D. late principal of Edmund Hall in Oxford, Author of a Diſſertation on the Claſſicks. Publiſhed from his Manuſcripts by William Felton, M. A. Price 4 s. 6 d.

2. Eight Sermons on the Divinity and Operations of the Holy Ghoſt, preached at the Cathedral of St. Paul's in London, in the Years 1740, 1741. at the Lecture founded by the worthy Lady Moyer deceaſed: by Gloceſter Ridley, LL. B. Miniſter of Poplar, Rector of Weſton in Norfolk, and late Fellow of New College Oxford. Price 4 s. 6 d.

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